Reminiscences

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"REMINISCENCES"

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By

KRISHNANAND

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FOREWORD :

I had the privilege of writing introduction to two very instructive and inspiring volumes, "SERMONS IN THE STORMS" and "EPISODES & EXPERIENCES" written by Swami Krishnanandji during the last three years. Swamiji has very graciously asked me to write a 'FOREWORD' also to his third publication which is going to be in the hands of readers very soon. I feel particularly grateful to Swamiji for his benevolent favours and affectionate regard for me.

Swamiji is a great traveller. He travels for eight months in a year, and has been on the move for the last twenty-two years or so throughout the length and breadth of *India.* These travels have given him occasions to acquaint himself with the mental characteristics of variety of our people, placed at times in delightsome and distasteful situations. The knowledge, thus acquired by personal and intimate contacts, has been guiding him to the path of living a peaceful and progressive life. The experiences gained by him have also proved helpful to a large number of people who have been fortunate enough to come into contact with him either in person or through his writings. He therefore naturally advocates in "TRAVELS TEACH," the need for every-one to travel, to the extent the requisite resources are available, to enrich knowledge and suitably transform life for one's own good and for the good of the society at large.

I have already mentioned on previous occasions that Swamiji is a keen observer and is gifted with the ability to discern correctly the causes of occurences which come in his way. He has also the boldness to acquire, even at personal risks, knowledge about things which are far from one's sight or imagination. His climbing up a dreary steep hill to meet *Yogini Devi*, his passing a night in a jungle abound with wild animals and his going down a pit to see how *mahatmas* live under-ground and to know about their spiritual activities, are some of the instances which bear testimony to his earnest enquiring spirit. These meetings and others described under the titles 'SINDHI SAINTS' and 'REBIRTH REVEALED' give ample evidence of the existence of thought forces by which messages can be communicated by elevated persons to others for the good of the deserving needy. I consider these experiences of Swamiji as marvellous. They also reveal the mysterious possibilities of the astral body which can leave the physical frame or enter it at will and has the freedom of movement in space, and to gain insight not only to look into the past but also foresee the future with amazing definiteness. Furthermore, they establish the presence on this earth, of divine persons who are actively, selflessly and constantly working far from our sight for the good of human beings and as well as of all living beings in God's creation.

Swamiji's experiences described under 'SORCERER SHANTINATH' reveal the existence of also another type of invisible force which can be operated only by some particular individuals at will, and its manifestations, though physically visible, cannot be explained on the basis of hitherto acquired scientific knowledge.

The vague problems of the individuality of soul and that the soul never dies, but after the departure from one physical body (the so called death) appears, sooner or later, in another physical form (the rebirth) and the ideas about its capability of action at a distance are now gaining realisation and reaching some solution. All this is due to the sincere quests of reliable and critically minded persons of spiritual advancement. Swamiji's descriptions of 'PAST PERCEIVED' and 'MISCREANTS' 'MISADVENTURE' lend support to these views. Let us hope that the day is not far off when we will be in a position to recognise and realise the existence of soul and its characteristics either by direct perception or its consequential positive and unquestionable performances.

There is a general tendency to assume that a devilish person is a habitual rogue and behaves as such at all times. This would classify all persons as either permanently good or bad for all times. The descriptions of 'PICKER PITIES' is probably one of the many examples which shows that persons labelled as villains can, at times, be kind hearted and possess finer feelings.

Swamiji is a recognised holy and inspired person and is marching rapidly forward on the road to higher progress. It is therefore natural with him to admire all individuals who are devotedly engaged in the worship of God in any form in which HE has incarnated or revealed HIMSELF on this earth or those who honestly believe that the performance of certain rituals will lead them to salvation. The narations of Swamiji's experiences dealt with in 'DEVOTEE DESPISED' and

'PRAVINA'S PILGRIMAGE' are in conformity with his views on this matter.

In the concluding articles captioned as 'PARENTS PUNISHED' and 'BEWARE BAPTISM', Swamiji has made some general comments in regard to the care of and moral education to the children and neglect on the part of Hindu religious preachers. His views are worthy of examination. For the good of themselves, their children and nation's well-being, it behoves the parents to sow in children seeds of goodness and understanding that they may realise and live up to their duties towards their kith and kin and their country. As for his strongly worded attack on the current-day religious preachers of *Hindu* religion, they are really thought-provoking and I have no doubt in my mind-knowing Krishnanandji as I do, that they have been made in good faith and out of his love for Hindu religion and culture. He appears to be not so much against foreigners seeking a gainful dip in the vast ocean of the ancient most spiritual wisdom of *Bharat,* as he is opposed to *Hindu* monks going abroad solely to attract foreigners to the fold of *Hinduism* as has become fashion amongst our preachers when there is so much to do in our own *Hindu* society, which is now under the clouds of ethical and spiritual bankruptcy.

In all, there are thirteen true incidents in this book of absorbing interest. Through 'REMINISCENCES', swamiji has indeed given a lie to the general belief that things given away free are so done because they aren't worth charging for.

It is my sincere wish that our people and even others in foreign lands who happen to lay their hands on this book will earnestly, reflectively and thoroughly read through its pages and derive the fullest profit from the experiences gained by Swami Krishnanandji.

May the Lord bless him with time and resources to share with us all more 'TRUE STORIES' from his rich treasure of superb experiences and enable us to advantageously understand the imperative need for self-improvement and upliftment.

Dr. Mata Prasad
D. Sc., F.R.I.C., F.N.I.,
Ex. Vice Chancellor,
Vikram University,
Ujjain.

Agra :
4th January 1968

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There are many kinds of love,
As there are many kinds of light.
Every kind of love—
Adds a glow to the light.
There is love that stirs the heart,
And the love that gives it rest.
But the love that leads life upwards
Is the noblest and the best.

(Selected)

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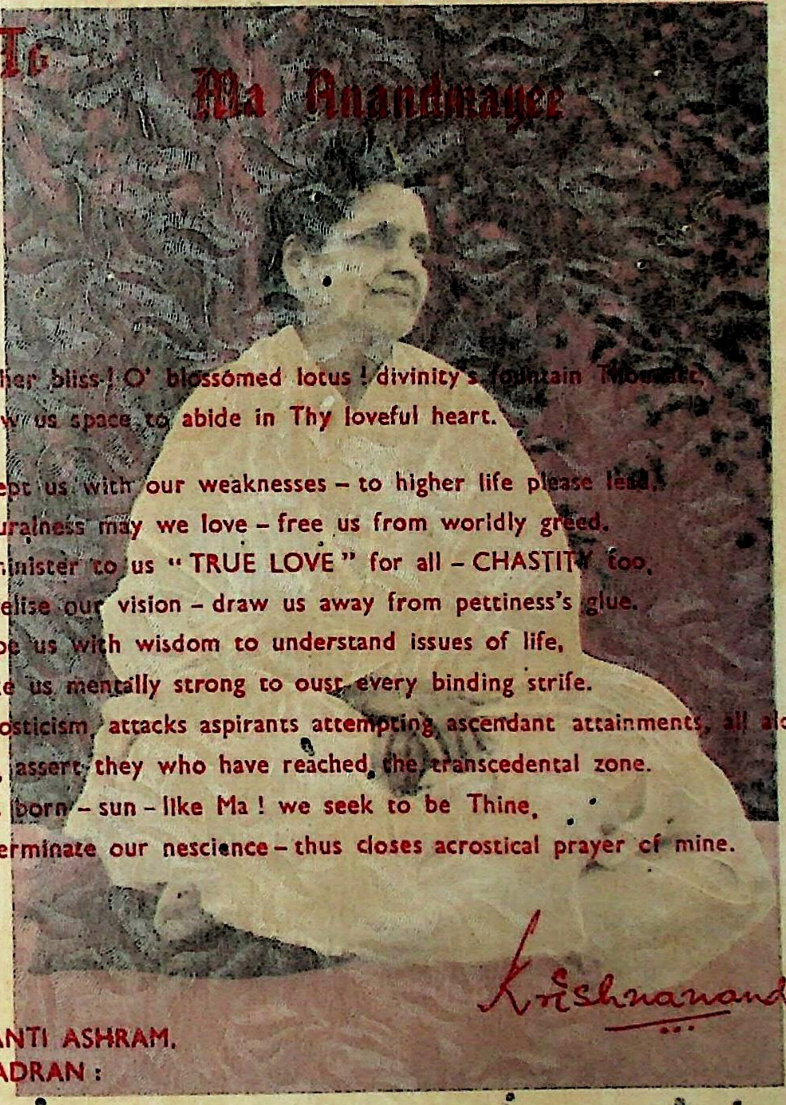
Dedicated with obeisance

to

Ma Anandmayee

the beau-ideal benefactress of bleessdness.

Krishnanand



To
Ma Anandmayee

Mother bliss ! O' blossomed lotus ! divinity's fountain Thou art,
Allow us space to abide in Thy loveful heart.

Accept us with our weaknesses – to higher life please lead,
Naturalness may we love – free us from worldly greed.
Administer to us "TRUE LOVE" for all – CHASTITY too,
Novelise our vision – draw us away from pettiness's glue.
Drape us with wisdom to understand issues of life,
Make us mentally strong to oust every binding strife.
Agnosticism attacks aspirants attempting ascendant attainments, all alone,
Yea, assert they who have reached the transcedental zone.
East born – sun – like Ma ! we seek to be Thine,
Exterminate our nescience – thus closes acrostical prayer of mine.

Krishnanand

SHANTI ASHRAM,
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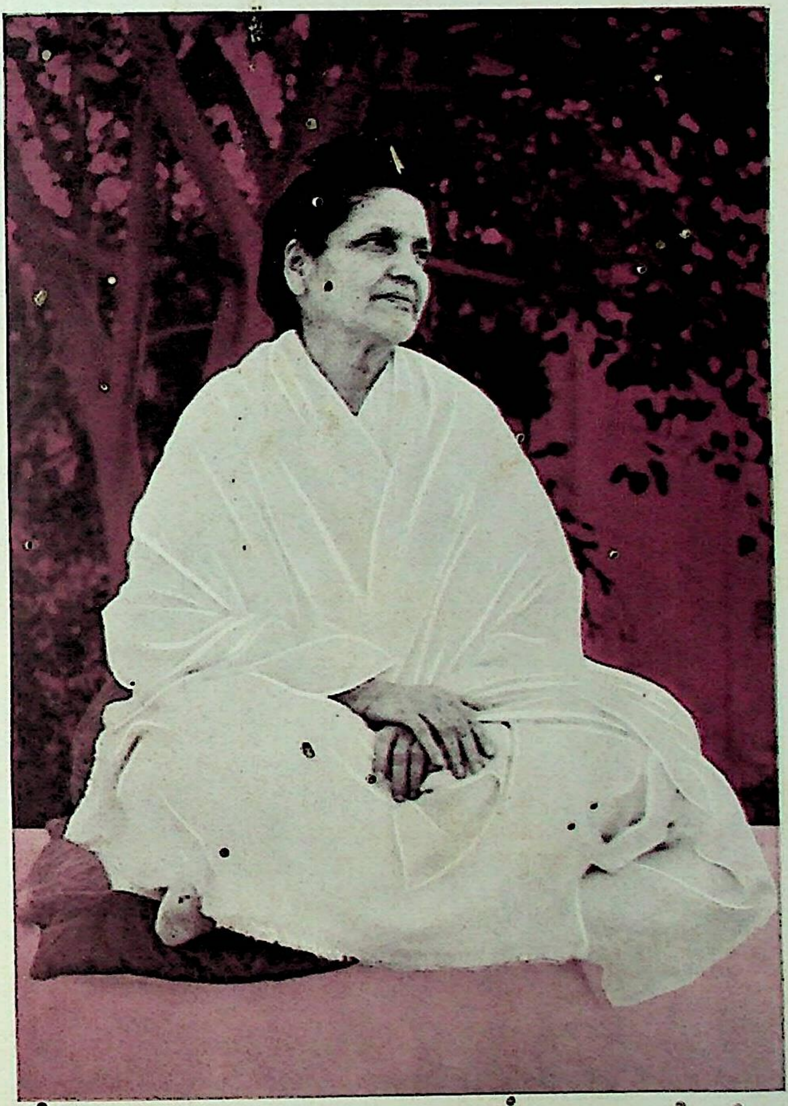

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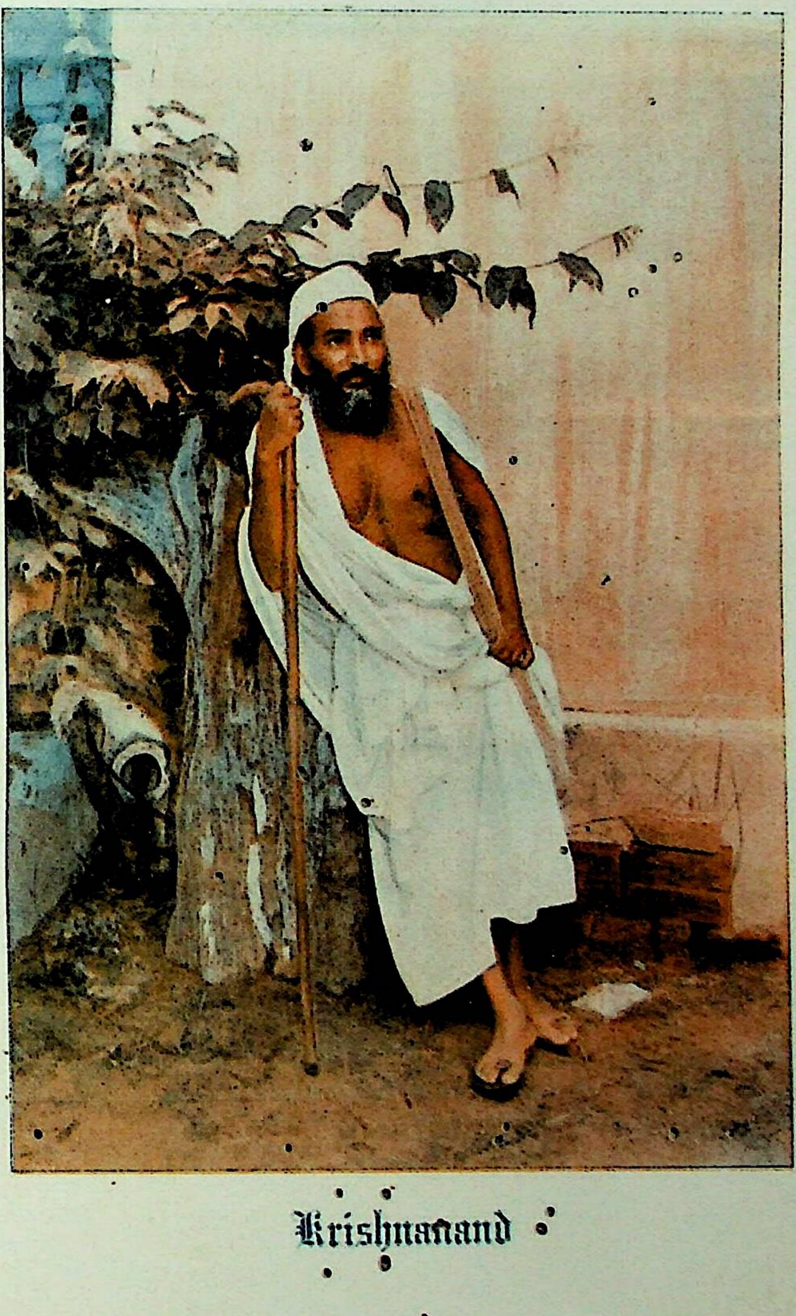

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT :

Beloved readers,

I have travelled widely and like all well-travelled persons, my wandering life is also full with diverse educative, exciting, enlightening and exacting experiences. Therefore, through 'REMINISCENCES' I come before you as your little brother who was out on long travels throughout the length and breadth of the country, to share with you all, some more travel experiences.

Because I happen to belong to the society of ascetics, it is but natural that I embark on travels solely with the aim of self-training to enrich my understanding and knowledge on spiritual matters, for inner growth – the supreme goal of human birth.

My extensive peregrination, I am happy to record here, have been highly rewarding and as already said above, I have come by trying situations and instructive incidents in the course of my contacts with empty and as well as wisdom-lit souls. Many of these educative experiences have been read by you in 'SERMONS IN THE STORMS' and

'EPISODES AND EXPERIENCES' (NOW OUT OF STOCK) and encouraged by the thousands of letters of appreciation from readers in *India* and abroad, I have included in the present series thirteen more TRUE EXPERIENCES in the belief that they might also prove to be of interest and gain to you all.

Interspersed in the narratives you will read also some comments, criticisms, contentions, convictions, clarifications, comparisons, counsels, and conclusions. Because printed matters somehow carry with them a deceiving effect of appeal, you are requested to please guard yourself against this trend and seriously judge whether they are truly consistent, clean, compatible, cemented, consoling, charitable, concrete and churned respectively.

On my part, all that I have to say is, nothing that I have said in the main pages of this book is calculated to prejudice, prick or pinch anyone. In whatever pattern of style, all my observations are merely my views – from the level of my understanding of things and I have draped them in my own expressions without invading the privacy of anyone. Yet, in few places where there are suggestive and specific mention of names, I beg to submit that I have been prompted to do so by considerations other than hatred or malice for anyone. I beg of you also not to understand me as wanting to sound novel, too good or wise. Instead, you will please take the narrations and opinions for whatever they are worth after little objective reflection.

That I have abundantly profited from the experiences published by me and also from good many others which I am to share with you all in subsequent series, is a perceptible REALITY for me. But, whether or not they are are capable of aiding you also to cross over from inimical indulgence to intelligent inquiry, incentive instruction and ideal improvement is for you all to search and reach to a decision.

I will deem my little labour of love adequately fulfilled, if any part of the main true experiences or what I have said in between the narrations, infuses into you all little more of TRUE LOVE for the visible beings before you launch yourselves on the love for the man created God and the invisible all – pervading ONE, little more of humane conduct, and little more of rational understanding of life and its issues. Should you honestly feel that the contents of this book have done so, in some meagre measure, you will please restrain the temptation to possess the book, and kindly pass it on to others also in the spirit of sharing, for their perusal and examination.

My generous friend Shri Chunibhai F. Patel of *Bhadran* had volunteered to bear the entire expenses of both the English and *Gujarati* publication. But as I felt that other charitable minded friends also should enjoy the privilege of having participated in a little educative venture such as this, some of my friends whose names appear elsewhere in the list of donors were invited to contribute, in certain cases specified sums and others, their mite. All of them rose to the occasion and have lovefully borne the publication cost of 'REMINISCENCES'. As persuation always carries with it a tinge of force and hence can mar the subtle beauty of any work intended to be given the shape and form of an offering to the divine, I have refrained from employing that embarrassing method in seeking donations for this book. Thus, I am glad to say that through the cooperation of my philanthropic minded friends I have been enabled to offer to you 'REMINISCENCES' also FREE OF COST.

My very sincere thanks are due to all of them – including those who have preferred to remain unanimous.

I tender my thanks to Dr. Mataprasadji also for having favoured me with a forword to this book even.

My thanks are also due to the talented commercial artist Shri Neelakamal, Baroda, for his designs, to M/s. Shri Ram Process Works, Baroda and Messrs. Prabhat Process Studio, Ahmedabad for the blocks which they delivered in time.

My especial thanks go to Shriman A. G. Patel, the Managing Director of Messrs. Chetana Press (Private) Ltd., Baroda and its dutiful and ever laughing Manager, Shri Mohanbhai C. Shah, for the particular interest they took in the general lay – out, get – up and fine printing work executed in a record time.

My affectionate pats to my young friends Shri Yogeshkumar R. Patel and Shri Hemeshkumar S. Patel both of Bhadran for their valuable help in the packing and despatching work.

Love and namaskars to all of you.

XII

May the omniscient bless us all to implement in our day to day life the following transforming alphabetical apothegms :—

ACTIVELY ADOPT ALTRUISM,
BANISH BRUSQUE BEHAVIOUR,
CURB CARNAL CRAVINGS,
DISMISS DISGRACEFUL DISPOSITIONS,
ERASE EMPTY EGOTISM,
FORSAKE FANCIFUL FEARS,
GAIN GRADELY GUIDANCE,
HUG HEALTHY HUMOUR,
IMPOVERISH IMPRISONING IMAGINATIONS,
JOIN JOLLY JOURNEYS,
KEEP KINDLY KNOWLEDGE,
LESSEN LIFE'S LIABILITIES,
MISTRUST MISLEADING MIRACLES,
NEEDFULLY NEUTRALISE NESCIENCE,
OPENLY OUST OSTENTATION,
PRETERMIT PERTINACIOUS PREJUDICES,
QUELL QUESTIONABLE QUESTS,
RATIONALLY REVIEW RELIGION,
SERIOUSLY SEEK SERENITY,
TRAIN THE TEENAGERS,
USHER UNIQUE UNITY
VIGILENTLY VANQUISH VACILLATION,
WIN WHOLESOME WISDOM,
'XPEDITELY 'XPUNGE XENOMANIA,
YET YEARN YOGA,
ZEALOUSLY ZEST ZOE.

Shanti Ashram,
BHADRAN

Your own self.
Krishnanand

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TRAVELS TEACH :

We learn more through our eyes. The more a person travels, the more he sees, and the more he sees, the more he learns. Travels educate us. A well travelled person is much better informed and is more intelligent than the person who has read a good deal from the galore of books by remaining confined to his house and home town.

Travels make us adaptable, self-reliant, self-dependent, understanding, loving, fearless, meek, simple, mirthful, mixing, humorous, observant, tolerant, kind, forgiving, and generous. Travels broaden our outlook, change our perspective and enrich our knowledge, giving us a healthy mould.

We find people who haven't travelled, lacking in the fine qualities listed above and consequently, they are unhappy.

It is certainly true that all can't travel far and wide. Apart from that, quick travels to long distances can also be expensive. Moreover, all may not find so much time. But then, all of us need not travel all over the country. One can always plan short trips in one's own province and within one's limit, without waiting for resourceful opportunities to surprise us for a long tour. We must effortfully make a modest begining. Once we succeed in doing little things, we get a push to tackle the better and higher issues.

The money which we waste in watching the unproductive cricket matches, seeing trash cine shows, playing card games for stakes, using narcotics, gaudy dresses, cosmetics, stale repasts from hotels etc., can be saved to be spent productively on a good educative trip.

For a change and funful experience. one can do some hitch-hiking in the country side, going out to villages walking about ten to fifteen miles per day. It will be an excellent exercise – energising and enjoyable. I know few families who go out in summer, at regular intervals, to sleep on the open river or sea side, on the hillocks, temples or farm-yards. Such outings strengthen us and free us from the harmful inhibitions. They bring us out of the rut and make us bubble with life.

Even women should be encouraged to go out in homely groups for seeing places. Our women in the cities, particularly the educated ones, can neither remain alone at home nor go out. With a view to gaining boldness, they should embark upon long distance travelling.

Besides different types of people belonging to different communities cum clans, wedded to different customs and traditions, there are super-abundance of things all over the country for our sight and delight. We have a large variety of colourful birds, animals, lakes, rivers, seas, gardens, dams, temples, hill-stations, farms, hills, mountains, places of pilgrimage, tombs, ancient monuments, frescos, caves, historical cities and towns and many other interesting things; all meant for our eyes to feast upon and to learn useful lessons from them.

School children and collegians should also be taken out on trips which may be aided by the government, so that the poor students may also get the privilege to travel and be taught.

For the past over twenty years, I have been travelling throughout the country and till now, I have done over twenty-nine thousand miles on foot and about twenty-five lakh miles by various conveyances. My travels have brought me in touch with a very wide range of people representing all classes and belonging to different castes and creeds. Amongst the thousands of persons with whom I have come in contact, there are also Artistes, Businessmen, Clergymen, Diplomats, Engineers, Farmers, Governors, Hypnotists, Itinerants, Judges, *Khidmatgars*, Lawyers, *Maharajas*, Nuns, Occultists, Preachers, Quacks, Ruffians, Sooth-sayers, Tantrists, Undertakers Vice-Chancellors, Writers, Xenomaniacs, Yogis and Zoologists—all of different shades and temperaments.

Looking back and taking stock of my strange and interesting travel experiences, many of which I have already published in my two previous books and some more of them are included in the present volume, I must honestly admit that but for travels I would have lagged behind without gaining the little progress which I have so far achieved in my spiritual life. Herein I give some humorous side experiences which have provoked my thinking and made me wiser.

Because all are not in an identical level of understanding, each person views different situations according to his stage of understanding, and hence we arrive at dual experiences of good and bad.

There were people who wanted to know why I was knocking about all over the country instead of staying in a place and doing my *sadhana*. When perchance I happened to camp anywhere for a fortnight or so, there were people who, quoting from the scriptures, wanted to know why I stayed in the city for more than three days.

There were people who asked me why I read newspapers. There were others who said that as a servant of God it is necessary that I should keep myself informed about the various happenings in different parts of the God's world - just as a government servant acquaints himself with the different directives, policies and progress of the government.

There were persons who asked me embarrassing and silly questions. There were those who never bothered to ask me anything. There were well-meaning people who asked me good many intelligent questions. There were persons who came to test my knowledge, some to exhibit their own, and there were also those who just wanted to tally and see if they rightly knew what they wanted to know.

There were some people who liked me and came to me because I am a seeker after truth, some because I am somewhat educated, some because they thought that I possessed occult powers, some because they felt that I was practical in my views, some because I happened to know their relatives or their superior officers and some because, through me, they could make way into higher circles of profitable contacts.

There were familiar persons who having pressingly invited me to their places, treated me with suspicion, and there were others who, though they knew me not, left their houses in my charge with all the rich belongings therein. There was a family, who in their joy to attend a marriage party, completely forgot my presence and left me locked in the upper floor where I had to remain for a whole day without water and food.

There were parents who cautioned their children to keep away from me, for, they thought, they may be influenced to become monks. There were parents who gave me a good hiding–suspecting me of attempting to lift their little sons. And there are noble parents who sent their youngest son with me with a four figure amount on an Himalayan pilgrimage.

In some places where I happened to be an invited guest, the women members treated me indifferently, desiring me to leave, while the male members lovingly pressed me to stay on.

There were homes where males didn't like my presence and there were and are, so many yet where every member in the house treated and treats me with unremitting love.

There were people who fancied that my visits to them brought luck, and drove away evil forces. There were people who believed that my blessings had won for them law suits, got them promotion and children, and increased their business turn-outs. There were also some who point blank wired to inform me that my blessings had failed. Fortunately, I have not been sued for the failure.

There are people who have suspected me of thefts from their houses. Some suspected me to be a member of the criminal investigation department and a secret correspondent in the pay roll of 'BLITZ', one of the very few progressive weeklies of India.

There were people who wanted me to smuggle things for them. There were persons who offered me proposals to head public institutions, own a temple, and collect funds for a non-existing orphanage. In the Himalayan areas of *Gharwal*, simple peasants offered to to become my in-laws. There were individuals who wanted me to give false evidences in the courts of law and persuade intimate witnesses not to depose against them in criminal cases.

A prince of an erstwhile state, now in the film industry, who happened to travel with me to Delhi in May 1967, offered me an important role in a mythological film in the offing. The terms were Rs. 2000/– p.m. plus a well furnished quarter and free conveyance to the studio. The contract was to be for eight months from the time of signing it. Shri Ajaykumar M. Bhatt, my young friend who was accompanying me, regretfully felt that I had not acted wisely by refusing such an attractive offer.

I met many duffers amongst the degree holders and saw talented and versatile individuals amongst those who had never even attended a high school. There were truly good people and those that were falsely branded to be so. I met people who consumed forty pounds of food in a single meal and those who had never eaten anything for more than twelve years. I met linguists, adept astrologers, top musicians, and people who never believed in God or religion but who were yet perfectly humane in their conduct and also those common ones who believed in higher things but still were outright cut-throats.

Several people sought my advise on diverse matters. I was asked to suggest suitable names to the new borns or to suggest the school where they may be sent to, I was also expected to use my influence to get the children admitted to the faculties for which they were least fit. Then, parents wanted me to tell them if matrimonial alliance with a particular party would be paying or not. People also desired me to deal with even such mean practices as settling dowry. A rich man asked me to threaten another person with doom, if he did not condescend to give his daughter in marriage to the former's crippled son. There were sisters who, unable to suffer the harassment in their husbands' home, wanted to know the easiest way of putting an end to their lives. There were also some who wanted me to prepare for them talismans capable of checking their husbands from taking interest in other women. A few didn't feel ashamed to consult me about the easiest way of bringing about a successful abortion. There were farmers who wanted me to tell them the location of water in their fields. There were also cases of persons who wanted to know if it would be a sin to kill their elders who were a constant source of nuisance to them; they claimed to be the devotees of Lord *Ram*.

Through extensive travelling, we acquire variegated experiences that are capable of teaching us to maintain mental composure, and to be patient, cheerful, good, modest and simple. TRULY, TRAVELS THOROUGHLY TRANSFORM US.

☆

SINDHI SAINTS :

In my last book, "EPISODES & EXPERIENCES", I promised you, beloved readers, to write more about Masthramji of *Sukkar* and Makrana Sahib of *Mirpurkhas* who transformed my life by freeing me from the clutches of fear – FEAR which had done considerable damage both to my inner and outer – self.

Here below are some more details gathered by me during the priod I was privileged to be with the above great souls. They were adepts in occult powers – particularly so in the technique of thought transference.

Because of his effective healing powers, several sick souls visited Masthramji. They included persons who were physically handicapped and also those who were mentally distressed. On the full – moon day of every month, there used to be a good crowd. Masthramji never spoke with anyone, nor did he make any signs. Very seldom he looked up at his visitors. Those whom he did look at with his dazzling eyes, always reported back, beaming with gratitude for having been miraculously cured of their ailment or afflictions.

Ailments both biological and psychological are possible of complete cure through spiritual healing. This system consists in bringing ease to the diseased through thought, touch or sight, or through all the three.

All those who were benefitted and those that hoped to benefit through Masthramji's spiritual therapy, always brought presents in the form of food and fruits and placed them before him. Sometimes there used to be heaps of them from which Masthramji and myself both ate frugally and regularly. The remaining food was given away to the birds and stray dogs. Nothing was stored for the next – day.

I know nothing about Masthramji's associations in the astral world – but at *Sukkar* he had only two feathered friends who visited him regularly a few hours after sun – set on every Friday. Masthramji seemed to know of their coming – quite in advance. For, I always noticed him sitting up few minutes before the arrival of his winged guests. It was an amusing sight of mystery. His nocturnal visitors were a pair of owls. They always came without howling or hooting and jointly used to perch themselves on the outgrown ponch of Masthramji. The mystic used to gently feed them with bits of food. After a sumptuous feed, the birds would take to wings and disappear in darkness.

One night, after I had been with him for forty days, I woke up suddenly – as if awakened by rough pats from human hands. Masthramji was in his place – far enough from me and in his usual pose of reclining. Whether he was sleep or awake, I couldn't know. Soon after I had yawned out to freshen myself from the residual effects of a fast slumber, I felt like rising and moving eastwards. It was a compelling urge. In obedience to that impulse, I rose and walked ahead in the eastern direction – towards the far off quarters where some railway men were living. After I neared the fore – yard of the houses, instinctively I knocked on one of the doors. The person who opened the door of the house looked at me in askance. I just gaped, unable to explain my midnight call and knock. Few seconds later, words gushed out of me and I said " THERE'S A COBRA IN THE CRADLE ". Because that railwayman, Babulal, knew me to be the one staying with Masthramji, without a second thought he ran in, beckoning me to follow.

I entered the room. We looked into the cradle wherein Babulal's one year old son was asleep – covered upto the neck with a sheet. Right around the sleeping form was also a cobra – now and then dilating its neek. Unable to face the fearsome venomous figure, I removed myself to the farther corner of the room and stood an a kerosene tin.

The commotion caused by our apprehensive and hurried entry into the room awakened Babulal's wife and her brother. All of us were panicky.

Babulal got a staff and poked the cobra out of the cradle and despite protests from his wife and myself, he killed it with quick strokes of beats. Immediately thereafter, the mother grabbed the baby from the cradle and we found it to be unharmed.

When asked by them as to how I came to know about the presence of the cobra in their house and particularly so in the cradle, I truthfully told them that the clairvoyant Masthramji woke me up from deep sleep and had telepathically directed me to them. They weren't surprised. They seemed to be aware of Masthramji's occult powers.

All of them followed me to Masthramji and offered thanksgiving. As was his wont, Masthramji remained mute. when the party left the place, Masthramji asked me about the length and the colour of the cobra –

– evidently confirming my correct guess that it was he who had mentally commanded me to go and warn the family about death crawling in the cradle in their house.

During tbe six months which I spent in the soul – uplifting company of Masthramji, I never saw him speaking to anyone. I was the lone Iucky exception and, as said earlier, he first talked to me only after I had been with him for forty days. Like all advanced ascetics, Masthramji always spoke to the point. He spoke with poise and in a select style. It was clear from his manner that the usage of vocal organ was strainsome to him. He had to put in efforts. Being an advanced telepath, it was far easier for him to mentally commune with his select contacts, whenever he ftelt necessary.

some days after the cobra incident, he motioned me to sit erect and do eight rounds of deep breathing and to become mentally blank. Then he said, " write down whatever thought–flashes occur to you. "

Obeyingly I began and involuntarily wrote out the following poems :–

Some call this world a dreary place,
And tell long tales of sin and woe;
As if there were no blessed trace
Of sunshine to be found below.

Shall we forget each sunny morn,
And tell of one dire lightening stroke ?
Of all the suits that we have worn
Shall we but keep the funeral cloak ?

T's true that nightshade oft will bind us,
That eyes, the brighest will be dim;
Old wrinkled care too oft will find us
But why should we go seeking him.

It is true that skies are sometimes dark,
And heavy shadows bind them,
Yet just beyond the sun still beams –
It only shines behind them.

And at the worst–if worst must come,
Take trials as we find them,
With steady gaze look through the clouds,
And see the sun behind them.

When a foolish thought within,
Tries to take us in a snare;
Conscience tells us, it is a sin;
And entreats us to beware.

If something we transgress,
And are tempted to deny,
Conscience says, your faults confess,
Do not dare to tell a lie.

When our angry passions rise,
Tempting to revenge an ill,
Now subdue it conscience cries,
Do command your temper still.

Thus without our will or choice,
This good monitor within,
With a secret gentle voice,
Warns us to beware of sin.

But if we should disregard,
When this friendly voice would call,
Conscience will soon grow so hard,
That it will not speak at all.

As I lifted my head after the final punctuation, Masthramjl began to repeat the poems orally while I checked up errors. Little while after, he said, " because you are fond of rhymes, I chose to mentally dictate to you the two poems by English poets. I am glad to observe that you are rcceptive enough to absorb thought-waves. " I mused at my good-luck in having such a powerful helper.

Methodical intake of fresh air through deep-breathing not only expels the unwanted stale air in the lungs within, but it also drives away mental and physical tensions making our bodily frame thoroughly pliant. That apart, deep-breathing carries requisite supply of rich oxygen to the brain and sharpens our intellect and enhances our power of thinking.

Mental stillness is the right state which enables us to pick-up thought-waves floating around or those that are under transmission by intimate circles. Through concentration, it is easier to record thoughts of a person whom one knows and with whom one has mental affinity. It is much more easy to receive the thoughts of a person who is well up in occult powers, because he would, even while he is sending the message, always affirmingly will that the other individual can't but absorb the radiations.

I am sure, Masthramji put into operation this infallible process in my case. For, otherwise, a raw novitiate like me couldn't have picked-up and recorded the poems transferred to my head telepathically.

On another occasion, I was prompted by him, telepathically again, to go into the town and inform one Mr. Baswani, an Engineer, not to allow his son to go up the terrace for kite flying. He didn't take the warning seriously. Late that evening he visited us and told repentantly about the fall of his son from the terrace, resulting in serious fractures to the collar-bones and knee-caps.

Now let us switch on to Makrana Sahib–the yogi. This linguist saint to whom I was made over by Masthramji, worked on me the way I have already narrated in my last book under the experience "FREEDOM FROM FEAR" and completely purged me of the corroding fear. Unfortunately, however, I was privileged to remain with Makrana Sahib for less than 20 hours only. But, while I received direct help from Masthramji only till I remained with him, Makrana Sahib guided me even after he left me and until I reached *Bhavnagar* in *Saurashtra* in the early part of 1950. I have benefitted from occasional help from him even thereafter.

As an immediate sequence to his stroking my brow-centre–a mention about which has been made in the opening narrative of the second series, I had an absolute clear vision of the Goddess's temple of the distant *Gangapuri Ashram* of *Bhavnagar* (*Saurashtra*). I was then told by him that in the course of my wanderings I would visit that shrine. The forecast came true and ever since then, I am regarded as an inmate of the *ashram* and I myself hold in deep reverence the *Swamiji* who now heads the said hermitage.

In 1952, Makrana Sahib directed me in a

dream to visit *Adityana* hills near *Ranavav* in *Saurashtra.* I was given a distinct indication of an aged old *Yogini* whom I would meet on the hills and, as also about the experience which I was to come by there.

Saints are visible agents of the invisible God. Out of natural compassion they draw the immature and the distressed souls and motivelessly extend to them all the counsels cum comforts essential for onward spiritual progress.

We may believe that what little peace and good values we encounter in our midst today, are the subtle radiations from super souls like Masthramji and Makrana Sahib silently working for the uplift of mankind groping in darkness, difficulties and doubts.

SORCERER SHANTINATH :

In the course of my wandering in *Saurashtra*, late one evening in 1953, I reached '*Kashi Vishvanath*' a temple of *Lord Shiva* suitably situated about a mile and a half from *Lalpur* town which lies between *Jamnagar* and *Porbandar*.

One Shantinath, an ochre-robed young man was the lone habitant of the place. I learnt that he was there for the last twelve years. He had originally come from *Punjab* on a pilgrimage to *Dwarka*, in the company of his preceptor and somehow chose to stay in *Saurashtra*. The loving people of *Lalpur* and other surrounding villages expressed happiness over Shantinath's choice to stay in that temple. They found him to be a good devotee of *Lord Shiva* as he spent long hours in worship and holy incantations. That's how Shantinath happened to gain a firm ground to permanently reside there.

Shantinath received me with poor grace and absent feelings. After a while, somehow we got on to talking about places and people. As our talks on *Kulu* Valley's atmosphere were in continuance, in one quick breath

Shantinath interposed, " now, let's stop here – I must first procure some food for you – you haven't eaten anything since this morning. "

How could he have known that, thought I – being pretty sure that I hadn't been thinking of food or hunger, and that apart, I full well also knew that a meal missed doesn't convey through one's countenance.

Shantinath rose agilely and going near the fire–pit, the type that monks of certain cults are supposed to incessantly maintain with fire and muttered something. Then, bending over the fire–pit, he thrust his hands into it and brought forth a plate covered with another. He placed the same before me and asked me to eat out of it.

Desiring a wash before eating, I rose to go to the well which wasn't far from the place where we were seated. Shantinath instantly waved me to stay back. Before my wide open eyes a miracle began to take place. The bucket near the well slowly stirred all by itself, it moved upwards and went down by the pulley into the well to fetch water for me. Because I wasn't under the spell of mental or optical delusion, what I saw flabbergasted me. The splash that is generally caused by the bucket going into the water with force before getting filled was also clearly heard. Thereafter, the rope began moving up and reeling outside, and with it the bucket was seen coming up. Shantinath then outstretched his hands, beckoning, as though, the bucket to come to his hands. The bucket moved in our direction, lavitating about forty feet and settling in the waiting hands of Shantinath. It was most astounding. It was an outright triumph over the natural law of gravitation. In wonderment, I had a wash and settled down to eat. I uncovered the plate to find in it fried breads, potato curry and a goblet full of sweetened milk.

Because it is almost comon for the monks maintaining the holy fire-pits to do light cooknig and stow inside it items of food to keep them warm, I didn't feel anything odd about the covered plate of food having been brought out of the fire-pit for me to partake. However, I couldn't account why Shantinath put the used plates back into the holy pit and that too, without getting them cleaned. this is something which is never done.

When chance permitted, I casually peeped into the pit to study its construction and see what it contained. Excepting little burning fire, I saw nothing in it. The plates weren't there either. I was transfixed with astonishment.

I had the feelings of being in the wonder-land of the Arabian Nights. However, the whole atmosphere around there, very strangely enough, gave rise also to sensations of repugnance and gloom. Shantinath himself began to appear to me as a person of shifting spirits. He behaved as one in agitation with his head and heart. He wasn't steady he didn't sit in a place for long.

Shantinath got up again and going to a corner, seated himself in the dark end of the long shed. Little later, he called me to join him. I went and took the proffered seat next to him, wondering why, when there were good many patches of lovely moon-bathed spots in the temple area, he chose the dark corner. Every movement of his began to puzzle me.

Clearing his throat, Shantinath began, "I have been on the look out for a young man of your tolerance and talents. I am glad you came. Now, I have a very advantageous offer to make and I can only hope that you won't allow this rare opportunity to slip by a thoughtless refusal to accept." His very manner of putting it made me measure mean designs cooking in his head. "The position is", he continued, "by dint of prolonged practices, I have achieved abundant and accrescent powers. Now, with a view to free myself to a little extent of their heavy burden and also to see that they may be available for the benefit of the society, I am thinking of transferring some of them to you. No sooner the transfer is effected through the traditional technique, then you would also be able to perform wondrous feats such as you were privileged to see me demonstrating." The offer was alluring and I felt elated at the prospects of gaining the legacy of miraculous powers within so short a period of my spiritual life.

A novitiate that I was, and had very scant knowledge about higher matters dealing with spiritual personalities and their wonderful powers, I was naturally enchanted and ensnared. I thanked Shantinath in terms befitting the occasion and offered myself for being vested with the powers which he so graciously proposed transferring to me. However, the eclipsed and emotionless countenance of Shantinath, even at the time when he held out the offer wasn't in keeping with the decorous demeanour of one who, having offered to give away something, would appear light and lively.

For quite a while we talked on several other matters. Talks with him were bereft of stimulating depth. From what I personally gathered after carefully sifting all that he said, shooting spittle as he spoke, was that either he was not of sound mental development or, though in ochre-robes, he wasn't a spiritual man – a lover of God. That he had hoard of powers was an open fact; at the same time that there was something fishy about him could also be smelt. In short, he wasn't normal – nor was he above normal in the spiritual sense. His behaviour was all too very conflicting. YET, THERE I WAS, LINGERING UNDER HIS DULLSOME ROOF, ANTICIPATING TO BECOME POWERFUL AND POPULAR. All of a sudden, in the midst of our conversation, Shantinath got up abruptly and went into the inside of his cellar with the haste of one very urgently summoned. I wondered what went wrong with him.

Left that way, I prepared my bed and endeavoured to sleep. As the atmosphere there wasn't good, I had a very disturbed sleep that night, even though I was fairly tired after a long distance walking on that day. On waking up in the early hours of the morning, the usual common state of buoyancy and refreshed mental feelings were totally absent in me.

Anyhow I hurried through my morning routine activities; by this time it was getting dawn and the fresh rays of the morning light began to disperse darknass and the birds tirelessly twittered. Then, with a view to usefully utilize the unclaimed time at my disposal, I went to the *Shiva's* temple for prayers.

Lo it was full of dust and dirt gathered for many months perhaps, this surprised and saddened me. It was odd that a shrine was allowed to remain the way it was by an ochre-robed person in charge of it. In the normal course, there should have been regular rounds of ritualistic services as per prescribed practice common for all temples. That there weren't evening services on the previous day, struck me only then. Ordinarily, in the evening also, there ought to have been waving of ghee light to the accompaniment of ringing of gongs, drum-beats and the chanting of meaningful hymns to the divine and decorated deity. Only in a place of a non-believer or a half-baked *vedantin* such carelss conditions could chance to obtain.

Of course, it must be said that in higher states of spiritual advancement one generally develops a spontaneous indifference unmixed with neither fondness nor dislike for idol worship. But even such a high individual, when he happens to remain in a place with a temple, would without fail see that it is kept in an orderly way – well washed and worshipped.

Dismissing all the hows and whys of Shantinath's neglect towards the temple, I set about cleaning it. While I was just half way through, Shantinath came – eyed me quizically for a second and dragged me away to the shed, somewhat severely saying, " now, enough with it – come along."

There in the shed, we seated ourselves near the holy fire-pit. Whereupon, Shantinath prepared to administer asservation and authority to me. Thoughts of emerging soon as a miracle man, made me madly merry and with that feeling coursing within me, I was overtaken with a feverish excitement. He poured little water in the cavity of my right palm, as it is customary to do so while taking an oath. He then gave me a piece of paper and asked me to read therefrom the following written matter and drop the water into the pit :—" I Krishnanand do solemnly pledge refreshed mental feelings were totally absent in me.

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It was there that the village people told me about Shantinath. My informants said that Shantinath who stayed in the outskirts of *Lalpur* was there since the past twelve years and the subjugated evil-spirits are helping him to do super-normal feats. They credited Shantinath with giving pecuniary help to particular people periodically. They said that he gave gold grains, generally filled in one pound bags, to some gold-smiths in exchange for ready money. Then, through emissaries in his employ, he got from *Calcutta* or *Delhi* good quantity of various items of utility and luxury for private distribution. Some received ornaments, expensive clothes, valuable watches and such other things. One or two lucky persons, it is believed, received diamond studded jewellery also. But the marvel of it all, they said was that very often these items of presents from Shantinath, mysteriously got into locked boxes or other concealed places of storage in the houses of his select beneficiaries. Among the things which Shantinath didn't do, the villagers said, was that he never produced ashes or vermillon – nor did he himself live luxuriously. They were all praise for his not going about blowing conches of his greatness. Because he was rich enough to distribute gold, the question of his wanting or accepting money, or market materials from his visitors, they said, didn't at all arise. Once a month, I was told, he fed little children with sweets.

Ah' yes, that's it he was a rank sorcerer in ochre-robes. Because he negated God, there was no question of his posing as one. Poor fellow! He had managed to subordinate the atheist spirits only. Otherwise, friendliness with theist ones would have given him the right to move about proclaiming himself to be the true Saviour of the distressed. As it happens on earth, in the spirit world too, there are believers and non-believers. With control over spirits who believe in God, one glibly talks of religion and God and goes about drawing, deluding and deciving the public by performing feats of sorcery.

I moved to a few other villages where also the local people told me what I had already heard about Shantinath. On the fourth day, I reached *Adityana* – a village near *Ranavav.* As is common, while in peregrination. for the itinerary monks, to camp either in hermitages or in places of worship, I went and lodged myself in the village temple. Evening services over, the temple priest enquired of me if I would like to dine that evening. When I said yes, the priest conducted me to the house of the village chief, also known as *Nagar Seth,* where visitors and pilgrims were usually provided with food and shelter.

Sethji welcomed me with expressive feelings and offered me a soft seat. As the dinner wasn't then ready, we engaged ourselves in a light conversation. Quite well-off economically and religious by nature, *Sethji* had a good deal to say. Listening to him meant taking practical lessons in patient hearing – a desireable quality in which most of us sadly lack. In the course of his sensible talks with me he told me of some strange happenings in his house. He complained of ornaments and new sets of clothes disappearing from the locked boxes and of the finding of gold pieces of the corresponding value of the vanished articles. He also informed me about cooked food disappearing from the pantry, together with the plates particularly when served and kept aside for someone, and of the reappearance of the empty plates, inside the cupboard well washed with ashes.

When I asked him as to when last did cooked food disappear from his house, he said, " why, only some four days back a full plate of food kept for my brother-in-law, disappeared little after sun-set. The plates and the empty goblet, have, however, come back as usual." When questioned, "did that plate contain a dozen pieces of fried breads a plate of potato curry and a goblet of sweetened milk – and wasit covered by a damaged plate," *Sethji* seemed stupefied, " Well, *Swamiji!* how did you come to know about it?" he queried. When I told him that it was I who had eaten the stuff, he held his temples with the thumb and the middle finger of his left hand – the palm covering his closed eyes – as in a pose of penetrative thinking – and asked me, *Swamji !* Were you in *Lalpur* four days back ?" . To my affirmetive reply came his rejoinder, "I have been suspecting so, 'SHANTINATH' was the person who gave you the food." His upturned eyes sought confirmation from me. I had to nod my head in admission.

Thereafter, expressing helplessness with his outstretched hands, *Sethji* seriously said, "Shantinath hasn't so far harmed anyone. We know nothing about the extent of his powers. Peace – loving as we are, we don't wish to expose ourselves to harm by meddling in his ways. It hasn't been granted us to know as to what ties of the past are operating in such mysterious happenings which, with surprise and sadness, we are occasioned to encounter, despite our well – worked precautions," concluded he.

Seven years later I learnt from press reports about the gruesome murder to which Shantinath fell a victim.

From the people around *Lalpur* came the report that another monk of Shantinath's cult who happened to take up residence in a

Goddess's temple in a village known as '*Choor,*' near the hilly area of *Porbandar*, managed to win over and entice the spirits which were under Shantinath's control. Thereupon, Shantinath became powerless and it is heard that goonda elements who had reasons to believe that Shantinath possessed lots of gold, gained an easy entry into his one-time impenetrable cellar and put him to death. The same sources said that, except a few bottles of illicit wine and raw mutton, they found nothing in the under-ground cell of Shantinath.

Not long after Shantinath's end, the other offensive *Nathji* from the *Choor Mata's* temple, it is also said, met the same bad fate.

During my extensive travelling throughout the country, I happened to bump into several seasoned sorcerers. From what I have gathered from them and from my personal observation of them, the following details will be of interest :—

(1) People of poor and illiterate class - with a blemished character are the ones who abound in the world of sorcery.

(2) Ladies, particularly widows from

Marwar, *Mewar*, *Maharashtra* and *Malabar*, can be rated as adepts in witchcraft.

(3) *Maharashtra*, *Malabar* and *Bengal* are the triple provinces which deserve the credit for being 'HOT-SPOTS' of high-scale wizardry.

(4) Spirits of predominant animal desires are the ones that are easy of subordination.

(5) Poltergeists are capable of entering live bodies not well protected by a sound 'astral aura'–a product of a healthy and virtuous living.

(6) In the process of subjugating the spirits, the witches and wizards have to undergo some dirty rituals, besides having to drink blood and kill dumb creatures for sacrifice.

(7) With all their powers, the members of the sorcerers' world, aren't healthy or happy. This is more true particularly in respect of those who have controlled the *tamasic* tempered spirits.

(8) Because the heavy sensual demands of the spirits cannot always be met, the

aggrieved and angered spirits, subject the sorcerers and the witches, to inhuman indignities.

(9) There need not be any doubt that all the ready-made articles which only a particular category of spirits are capable of bringing aren't 'MADE IN HEAVEN' brands. All of them are invariably pilfered ones, lifted from safes, houses, and shops of your brethren.

(10) Of one thing all of us may be too very sure – these spirits can NEVER harm anyone, except, as said earlier, those who have had bad past ties with them or whose mental built is too very weak.

At the end, I can only add that it is never adviseable to have anything to do with the spirits or with those who are dealing with them. In order that they may not seek us or harm us, all that we must do is not to evince interest in them and at the same time keep ourselves strengthened by a pious living.

YEA-YOGINI

When people in *Adityana* village talked to me about *Yogini Devi* residing atop the nearby hill, I felt excitement surge through me because that knowledge connected Makrana Sahib's directions to me in a dream. People made diverse claims about her. An old man who boasted of having roughed sixty severe summers, said that his grand-father who died at the age of 105, five years back, had seen *Yogini Devi* and that she was 80 or so then. Many others openly acknowledged to have had a glimpse or *Yogini Devi* from a distance. Proofs of *Yogini Devi*'s presence on the hill came also from several simple shepherds who frequented the foot of the hill daily to graze their cattle. A few adventurous youngmen said that they had gone up the hill and moved about everywhere without finding *Yogini Devi*. But they had seen there a small temple of *Lord Shiva*, well kept with a regular worship. That made them to surmise about human presence there. Even with all the widespread talks about *Yogini Devi's* presence and good many people actually admitting to have personally experienced her powers, none could give me a clear description of *Ycgini Devi* because no one had met her from close quarters. Some also did tell me that *Yogini Devi* didn't want curious crowds climbing the steepy hills simply to tire themselves out. I was also told that those who tried to be insistently adamant, found stones and boulders coming down the hill, making a climb impossible. As the village folks held *Yogini Devi* in high reverence, through tactful threats of divine wrath, they warned the youngmen to keep away from the hill. The popular belief current in the village was that the atmosphere around the hill was highly soothsome and inspiring. Many people talked about having received valuable help and guidance from *Yogini Devi* in mysterious ways. There was a case of a shepherd who, one afternoon, was asleep near the hills while his herds were grazing. He dreamt of a sheep having fallen into a well and its struggle for life. When he woke up startled, he did really find one missing. He rushed to the well and with the assistence of a few persons from the nearby farm rescued the dumb animal.

As none in the village had seen or talked to *Yogini Devi* personally, all the help and guidance attributed to her, always came to the people of *Adityana* village and other stray visitors, in the form of dreams. In all such dreams, people invariably saw a faint form of *Yogini Devi*. Peoples' dreams were of different orders. There were dreams in which people recognized the events to come in the unborn future and also those that gave others a clear peep into the dead past and the current present.

To cite a few more from the long chain of succour people had received from *Yogini Devi*, the following authentic instances can be included :– (1) The police patel of the village was granted an advance awareness about a fatal fall from a tree top. It came correct. (2) A local grocer clearly saw in dream his late grand parents storing away valuables inside the made to order places of concealment in the house. Deft digging in the house got him what his ancestors had kept aside. (3) A native doctor from an adjacent village was enabled to see his kidnapped daughter being taken in *Kirti 'Express'* bound to *Mehsana* in *Gujarat*. The dream vision was so very distinct that he saw and knew that his daughter was wet with nervous perspiration. He managed to overtake the train by a hot chase in a car and got the kibnappers nabbed and nailed to a jail term.

Amongst numerous persons who got earthly benefits from *Yogini Devi*, there were quite a few who having got what they wanted, kept themselves open to receive what *Yogini Devi* wanted to give them. But, unfortunately, as it generally happens in such cases, not all of them could couageonsly career ahead in the spiritual training so benevolently imparted by her.

Instead of forging ahead through perspiring perseverance, most of us choose to idly sit and laze like a cat warming near the hot oven. It will be to our advantage to yet believe that success never comes to those who are lethargic and habitually doubt, shout and flout.

The factual accounts about *Yogini Devi* amply amazed and amused me. I became delirious with delight at the prospect of meeting such a powerful psychic personality. Though I had valid reasons to believe that my going up the hills would not amount to a questionable intrusion upon the privacy desired by *Yogini Devi*, yet I felt that I should seek her permission before embarking upon the climb to meet her. So I began sendig out concentrated thoughts of supplication that she may grant my prayer also, just as she had fulfilled the desires of others. I willed for a reply by midnight and faithfully believed that it would come.

It was dark half of the month and I was all to myself on that fine Friday, few hours before midnight. My room in the village temple was small. And when the lights were put off, the place became pitch dark. Light, as we all know, hinders one-pointed thinking, whereas darkness promotes calmness cum concentration. Around midnight, I began endeavouring to visualize *Yogini Devi*. I manoeuvred my mental sight up over the hills. It didn't take me long to spot her serenely seated figure. Within moments, I had a faint feeling of being invisibly aided and suddenly I caught sight of Makrana Sahib also, emerging upon the path that led to the tree under which *Yogini Devi* was seated. Little later, there were thought-flashes of assent for my ascent up the hills with helpful hints to go up from the southern direction. Because I could not maintain mental composure any longer, I lost contact of the far off vision of the hill and the holy ones. My repeated attempts to get reconnected failed. EXCESSIVE EXERTION EMPTIES ENERGY & ENTHUSIASM.

Next morning, soon after the sunrise, I walked up to the foot of the hill – about two miles from the village – and began climbing from the southern side of it as directed. I had to do a good deal of criss-crossing to take myself up. Because that hill wasn't regularly climbed, there weren't cut tracks to make the climb easy. At places, I had to use all the fours for my final reach to the top.

Even with the several slopy ridges around, the place on the top of the hill was a wide enough table-land like, with thick closely knit clusters of trees and heavy growth of wild vegetation.

I moved straight to the tiny temple of *Lord Shiva* which was at the extreme eastern end of the hill and rested there for a while. No body was near about the temple. The temple appeared to have been recently washed and the usual conventional rites of worship performed there were also apparent.

The general atmosphere atop at that hill was fully free from foul influences and it filled me with welcome warmth of inward peace. I rose and went inside the temple and seating myself there I did some breathing exercises. Indeed, a closer survey confirmed my earlier observation that the thorough tidiness of that tiptop temple was being regularly, regardfully and religiously attended to by some holy human hands.

I offered my prayers to the deity there in the following-strain:—

LORD SHANKARA! how sweet is Thy divine name,
Oppressed ones find solace in uttering the same.
Reverentially, the celestial bards sing of your fame,
Devils' malignant skill, in your presence become lame.

Saviour great! grant me refuge at Thy feet,
Hold me back from warming in ego's heat,
Aggrace me that I may unreservedly love all,
Nurture my faith that I mayn't from progress fall.
Kindle my wisdom that I may cross bondages' wall,
Assist me to sternly ignore mind's downward call.
Radiate in me security through Thy benevolent sight,
Acquit me gracefully–envelope me in your light.

After the prayers I moved about all over the hill-top without finding anyone. I tried to look for concealed caves or cellars. I didn't spot any. Tired at last, I returned to the temple and partook of the lunch that I had carried with me and drank water from a pool of fresh water near the shrine.

Thereafter, I did the obvious thing, "WAITING" for *Yogini Devi*. The fleeting hours found me mentally restive and in that impatient frame of mind I began to wonder whether I would be able to see *Yogini Devi* on that day also, in the same form as I had seen her in the dream – a mention of which you read earlier. In that particular dream I had seen her arrayed in dazzling rich aura; her tall thin physical frame engulfed in the oval – shaped spirals of bright yellow colour and with a disc - shaped golden hue around her head. I had never had a dream more vivid than the one herein narrated. From what I was taught about the auras by Masthramji, the above type auric compositon indicates an individual of a sound spiritual status.

Then, I thought of how, when she came, I should greet her and what should I ask her – and how I, with my then fragmentary knowledge of *Gujarati*, would be able to converse with her, if she happened to know that language alone. It was, while I was so engaged in speculative thinking, that I heard ruffling sound of someone or something wading across the ground which was covered with dry leaves fallen from the trees.

I turned back and beheld a fair feminine figure. Though aged, she was nimble – footed and walked erect with a staff, – holding her head high. The weight of the years didn't seem to press too heavily upon her. Her skinny body was covered with a thick garment made of barks of trees. The unkempt mass of hairs which flowed from her square head was greyish and touched her knee joints. The well developed frontal lobes of her square head was a clear indication of her owning a balanced and blended brain with a fine ability to deductive reasoning – from generalities to particulars. I was trifle disappointed when I could not see her alluring auric attire.

On the whole, however, I felt graced and satisfied by her peaceful bearing – radiating peace all over.

As she neared, I fell prostrate at her holy feet – the traditional *Hindu* way of greetng the venerable elders. She simply smiled and signalled me to follow. We went to a giant fig - tree which was right immediately behind the *Shiva's* temple where she seated herself on a shrubby spot and wiped the beads of sweat on her forehead. Speaking in *Hindi* thereafter, she said, "sit son,"

I sat directly before her. The way *Yogini Devi* straightened herself and closed her eyes, it occured to me that she was preparing for communion with distant souls. Quite a while after, she opened her eyes.

After a passing look over, by way of an unoffending survey, she changed over to a twinkle of delight beaming in her sparkling eyes and slowly said, "Makrana sahib had talked to me about your having met him in *Mirpurkhas* through Masthramji. Only last night, as you know, the good *yogi* was here. It was he who through the powerful process of thought relays first brought about requisite fluctuations in your brain pattern and then enabled you to vividly see us and also assisted you to receive the thought messages from us."

The very knowledge of the extent of interest of the great ones in those who are yet immature, brought forth tears of merriment from within me. Really, without the aid and assistance from the evolved ones – which goes a long way to function as a fillip and to strengthen one's faith in the spiritual path, it would be well nigh impossible for anyone to progress. The talented, train and teach those who actively aspire for a lift to the higher realms of the blissful spiritual experiences. Yes, we may as well note that the coventional notion that a single preceptor alone should be stuck to, isn't rational. At the same time, the thoughtless and too frequent change over to other guides isn't a wise move either.

Continuing, she said, " to many, success comes the hard way. Being a female by birth, the first thirty years of my spiritual life was wrought with worst obstacles. There were hinderances from all quarters. Yet I clung on in the firm hope that the trials can't be haunting one for too long. By the grace of the holy helpers, at last, I got through the uplifting pursuits undertaken by me. Now that it is all over, I am happy that I am better placed by my personal experiences of the past, to endeavour to minimise, if not obviate, the common difficulties in the path of sincere seekers."

" From what I have been told about you by my associate, Shri Makrana sahib and also from what I am personally able to see of you, I am glad that you have come up well. But, you have still a good deal to learn and know. With diligent application, you will earn higher progress. Help will come to you whenever you really need – provided you do what you can and what you should. It will be to your advantage to bear in mind that in spiritual practices, HASTE, TASTE & WASTE shouldn't be allowed to creep in. "

" I know what all you desire to know about me and also about the present whereabouts of Makrana sahib and Masthramji. But then, however natural your this inclination may be, I must make it clear to you, son, giving vent to curiosity and endeavouring to dig out unproductive details about anyone isn't the way of a *sadhaka*. A true aspirant should develop deep detachment and dispassionate disposition. Indulging in trivialities is a WASTE of time and energy. Remember also son, saints aren't free to satisfy the whims of their visitors, and those that freely indulge in attending to the fancies of their callers aren't saints. We shouldn't forget, saints are beings charged with a mission and, as such, are very busy bodies and aren't available for fun and frolics."

"Now son, we must part. I have other things to attend to. But before we do so, I have to get you through a particular experience. See that you don't feel upset. "Saying so, she rose, walked up to me and asking me to sit erect, she began to slowly massage my temples with the central part of her palms in a rotating motion. She continued the process for four or five minutes and thereafter, placing both her open hands on my head made me to hold on to her toes with my finger-tips. No sooner I complied, then, she softly said, "ah, you are now all set to receive the currents. Our blessings are with you. We shall call you again when we need you. Let go my toes, I now go, and you will also go back after you have gone through the impending experience."

As she left, I began to sense slight shiverishness overtaking me and my limbs becoming heavy. From that state I could very hazily see *Yogini Devi* gracefully pacing away westwards unmindful of what was happening to me. A little later. I found my whole physical form bulging – a sensation signifying something struggling to get out of me from within. My body continued to bulge and become biggish. I must have grown to the staggering size of the African quadruped known as Hippopotamus. It was all very strange and sickening. I rolled over on my back and instantly there were intermittent "DON'T FEEL UPSET" advice ringing in my ears – to buck me up. After about ten to twelve minutes, I began to rapidly reduce reaching to my normal form and size. That excruciating experience of expansion thoroughly tired me. I became sleepy and fell asleep there on the hill itself. I woke up next morning well after the sun had risen. I was then full of fine feelings. I glanced around, the whole place was as peaceful as it had been. Thinking that the water in the pool there would be much more useful for better purposes, I left the hills without a wash or bath. The downward descent didn't take me long. I reached the village and got through my usual ablusions and other routine engagements.

That night, when it was all quiet outside and when I myself was quiet within as I lay on my usual light bed made up of a bare sheet spread out on the ground, I was suddenly seized with a light tremulous sensation all over my body. I knew it to be another attempt in the offing on the part of my astral body to get out. Within moments, I perceived a mass of gasuous matter emanating from the umbilicus and going up forming a shape similar to the size of my physical body. I felt in me the lightness of a piece of paper. Just at a point when I was nearing the fifteen feet flat ceiling of the room, I turned over involuntarily. It was then that I found myself connected to the gross body lying below, with a sort of slender and flexible *mercurial* rope. It was certainly a very exhilarating experience. When I had been in that state for few minutes, my astral frame which was resplendently bluish in colour, slowly went down and as it neared my physical body, around three feet distance from it, it turned over once again, automatically and assumed the position of the body that was lying below. Then, with a thud as though, it merged with the physical body – awakening me with an awfully painful startle. Possibly that was due to the inconsistent vibrations between the physical and the subtle body at the time of the union. That first experience of getting out of the physical body caused me to suffer bodily unrest for the whole of the next day.

The aforementioned two experiences have filled me with a kind of wonderment, the like of which I have never had known before. I can only assert that a great deal of what we have to pass through in the phenomenal processes of pleasant evolution, confronts us in the natural course of events as per the meticulous divine scheme. All that we need really do is to keep ourselves open through calm – cooperation and ethical etiquette, i. e., we should sincerely strive to develop and cultivate the exhortations contained in the following verses :—

Always honour everyone and to truly love start,
Never close for anyone the doors of thy heart.
Be liberal in your outlook – serve selflessly and unseen,
See good in everyone – in your dealings do be clean.
Practice self – restraint and fine health & vigour win,
Through piety burn to ashes this binding life of sin.

In conclusion, I am tempted to affirm from the depth of direct knowledge gathered from personal observation, of the progress and perfection attained by women *sadhakas* and saints, respectively, that nature has so constituted women, of head and heart that they can come by speedier psychic opening compared to their dominating and egoistic counterparts. In asserting so, I have in mind the unique cases of some from the long list of women *vedic* seers like the brilliant Somavati, Sukirti, Shradha, Kaamaayani, Devala, Puravasi and the famous Lopamudhra. It would be in the interest of the society at large that women are given even opportunities and reasonable freedom to pursue spiritual practices and attain transforming powers just as *Yogini Devi* and her like laudable ladies have done.

SAINT SPEAKS :

Normally, society accepts and acknowledges as saints, only those who deliver religious discourses and write religious books, run religious institutions, feed the poor, cure the sick and come into lime light by performing miracles or succeed to the chair (*gaddi*) of a religious head. (*guru*).

Saintliness is, however, essentially a quality of inner development rather than external appearances. There may be an house-holder who lives a detached and pious life while there may be a person who is ochre-robed and yet enmeshed in worldliness. There may be an individual who lives amidst pools of dirt but who is yet holy and pure within while another who, though spotlessly clean outwardly, is yet black and dirty at heart. There may be a person who is apparently mad, but his may be genuine madness for God attainment–who knows? There may be persons who take only to give back; there are others who generally give in order to take more. There may be persons who serve, motivated by love and compassion, while there may be others who in the name of service to the sufferers only serve themselves. There may be a well-dressed person who talks very nicely on higher philosophical matters without true love for God while there may be a man in tattered rags who may never talk or cannot talk of God and still happens to be very near HIM in thoughts and deeds. So, you see, dear readers, outer appearances are very often deceptive. A saint is a man of God and like HIM, he is also difficult of being understood and known.

Besides those who are known in the society and are amidst us, it will be of interest and advantage for us to know that there are also good many other saints who are moving about incognito, sanctifying people and places. Truly, there are also so many others who live in under-ground caves and tunnels in obscure places, cut away from human contacts, aloof from the humdrum world, and yet they are silently working for the welfare of human society.

True saints, we must understand take us out of the darkness of worldliness and lead us towards the light of self-knowledge. Those who are immersed in worldliness and are leading luxurious lives, however much they may be versed in the scriptures, they aren't the type who can lead the society to freedom from sensual bondage. The first and the greatest duty of a preceptor is to preach goodness emphatically, by first being a wondrous example of it himself and thereby gave his followers from drowning themselves in the vast ocean of sins. Those who are capable of awakening true love for God in their devotees, by making them to refrain from all condemnable conduct, thay are alone worthy of being called saints or preceptors. Those who have earned God's love, they alone can give it to others; certainly not those who just jabber on God and religion.

True saints never foster worldliness by condescending to do things that are not advocated by religion. A true saint, by the power of his dispassion, curbs the worldly desires which trouble his desciples. A true saint would never want to know what people think of him, because his supreme aim is to please God and win His grace alone. All the scriptures of the world religions aren't tired of narrating the greatness, grandeur and glory of such saints.

A true saint would never deride, decry or disgrace the devotees belonging to other religious sects. Instead, he would openly propagate the oneness of all religion – in as much as all of them lead only to God and liberation.

Narrated in the following pages is an account of my meeting with a great saint who has been staying incognito in an under-ground cave for the last twenty-one years now. He is venerable Vishvaprem.

In the course of my peregrination in *Saurashtra*, I once camped in the village of *Itwa* which is near *Dhroneshwar Mahadev*, a popular temple situated some thirty miles away from *Veraval*. From there, I was to proceed to '*Tulshisham*,' a famous spot for sulphur springs in the *Gir* jungles.

On enquiries, the local people told me that it was six miles from the village. As I felt that I wouldn't take more than two hours to walk the distance to reach that place, I started from *Itwa* at about four in the evening. Even though it was nearing sunset and I had already covered over six miles by then, there were no signs of habitation nearby. As I headed on, there came from the opposite direction a man on a horse back. I asked him as to how far was *Tulshisham*. He said that I would still have to walk about six miles. Then, warning me of the dangers in the jungle, with the setting in of dusk, he asked me to return with him to *Itwa* and resume the trip the next day, but since I got an opportuuity to know what it is like to be in a thick jungle all alone on a dark night, I declined to go back with him.

In *Gujarati* they say '*gau*' for two miles. Instead of telling me that *Tulshisham* was six '*gaus*' far, I was wrongly informed that it was olny six miles. That's what got me caught up in the mid-jungle by dusk time on that day.

Darkness was fast enveloping on that evening of the second half of the month. As is advisable on such occasions, I mounted atop a large banyan tree and stationed myself on some joint branches where I could sit at ease. I fastened myself well to the branches with the rope which I was carrying with me so that I might not fall down if I happened to doze in moments of sleep getting the better of me.

It soon got pitch dark and that night passed too very slowly – crowded with the deadening cries of the various animals that lived there. Except for two wild cats which came up the tree to eye me, that heavy night waned somehow with no untoward incident and the dawn was making its appearance felt.

When it was bright enough, with the well-lit dey light, I got down from my perchment and got through a wash in a small passing stream.

After that I began my onward journey. Well after I had covered half a mile, I perceived a large boulder, fifty feet far from me, moving. Taken aback by that sight, I hid myself behind a large tree and watched on. Slowly, the boulder turned aside and from a pit which it had covered, walked out a lean figured monk in his *birthday* suit. He had a water pot and a small piece of cloth in his hands. He replaced the boulder and went in the direction of the stream.

I had very often heard about *mahatmas* living in the under-ground tunnel, that linked *Porbandar* with *Junagadh* in *Saurashtra*, but that was the first occasion when I saw one. I felt happy, for I stood the chance of knowing something about those underground souls who were working for world welfare by remaining away from the worldly.

The *mahatmaji* returned, looked around and uncovered the pit by pushing the boulder with his both hands. Then he got into it and covered the entrance by withdrawing the big boulder back.

Because I feared that I might not be allowed to get into the cave had I met him immediately after his return, I decided to get into the cellar after he went in; by operating the boulder the way he had done. But I didn't know how he would take my unexpected entry. It would be a clean trespass upon the privacy of a holy person in penance. Yet, I couldn't curb my curiosity.

I went near the boulder and surveyed it. It was a massive one and appeared to weigh many maunds. But when I pushed it with the pressure of my both hands, it yielded and I laid it aside. It appeared, that by careful chiselling, its original weight was reduced to perhaps a hundredth part. As such, though externally it appeared to be big and weighty, because it was hollow inside; actually it didn't weigh more than hundred pounds. The entrance to the underground cellar was circular and its diameter must have been about two feet. When I peeped into it, I saw a rope-ladder lying suspended from the top and touching the ground below at fifteen feet.

I braced myself to go down, and before I did so, I mentally offered my apologies for the questionable invasion that I was about to make. With the help of the rope ladder I reached the bottom. There were bamboo mats spread on the moist ground. The damp atmosphere around there was also mixed with a very queer smell. No sooner I landed, a well dressed man ran up to me and asked me who I was and why I had entered in that way without the prior permission or invitation from the occupant saint. I didn't know what to say. The seated saint seriously sized me and beckoned me to come. I offered my salutations and suitably begged him to forgive me for thrusting in. Disarming me of estrangement, he said, "Beloved brother! you needn't be hurt. Anyone else in your place would have also chosen to come, in the way you have done. There's nothing wrong in visiting the *sadhus*, religious functions, and one's dear ones without any invitation or the usual formalities." Then, introducing the gentleman present there, he said, "meet *Seth Narottamji* of *Jaffarabad*. He comes to me once in nine months." After that, with visible concern, he hastened to the entrance, went up the ladder and brought the boulder over the inlet.

Of lean and thin physical structure, reminiscent of one in spiritual austerities, the *mahatmaji* appeared to me about forty years old, tall in height and towering in personality, he was the type who inspired love. The cellar was 20' x 40'. Only a little portion of it was plastered with cement and that was used by the *mahatmaji* for sitting and sleeping. Three canisters with *wooden* coverings, a large size deer's skin, a *woollen* blanket, a water pot, a lamp stand and a bronze statue of *Lord Dattatreya* were all that were there by way of his bare necessities and belongings.

The *mahatmaji* came down the ladder, lit the lamp with his lighter and took his seat, asking us also to do the same. Thereafter, he held out a pen and asked me, "is this yours"? I said yes, and added, "it must have fallen off from my bag while I got in here."

He held the pen tight, withdrew his sight and surprised me by saying, "this pen doesn't belong to you. It has all along been used by a tall person who is very sensitive and domestically unhappy. The owner of this pen has had to write many pages, many times, against his conscience and I think he is a Judicial Officer. This pen has last been used to take down a poem," concluded he and handed me the pen.

It was for the first time that I was meeting a person who was an adept psychometrist. He was able to see with his fingers. Mere handling of an object passed on to his brain thought-waves associated with it and he deciphered them intuitively, giving out the factual details. What impressed me more than this feat was the spontaneity of his performance. It wasn't an effortful or egoistic exhibition. One of the unique traits of true saints is that they act naturally.

Truly, the pen wasn't mine. It belonged to a Judge friend of mine. It got mixed up with my baggage inadvertantly and I had noticed it only after I had left his place a few days back. I had seen him possessing that pen for some years past and he used to write and rewrite with it, his judgements, before dictating them to his steno. Other descriptions about the owner of the pen were also correct. The pen was also last used by my friend in my presence to note down the following poem by Rudyard Kipling :—

If you can keep your head when all about you,
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too.
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies.
Or being hated don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise.

If you can dream and not make dream your master,
If you can think and not make thoughts your aim,
If you can meet with triumph and disaster,
And treat those two imposters just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you have spoken,
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build them with the worn out tools.

If you can make one heap of all your winnings,
And risk it on one tnrn of pitch and toss.
And lose, and start again at your beginings,
And never breath a word about your loss.
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew,
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you,
Except the will which says to them : 'HOLD ON'.

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings – nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much :
If you can fill the unforgiving minute,
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the earth and everything that's in it,
And which is more – you'll be a man, my son.

Turning to Seth Narottamji, the *mahatmaji* said, "you have been wanting to know since long as to why and how I came to settle down here. Now that you are two, the untold story can now be told. I hail from *Kerala.* After graduating in 1942 from the *Layola College* in *Madras*, I was assisting my father in his export business in Cochin. The way my father went about dodging taxes and indulging in other malpractices associated with the general export trade, weren't to my liking. I didn't want him to labour that way to provide for me, his only son. I am not ashamed to say the truth that my father was also a reveller, having got himself mixed-up with the beauties, bottles and bettings. Strangely enough, he also spent sometime in what he called *bhakti.* He maintained a special *pooja* room wherein he kept the portraits of good many gods and goddesses and remained locked up in it. Heaven alone knows whether he was doing *bhakti* or bousing behind the door.

Though he was a beast and a *bhakta* rolled in one, in social circles he enjoyed the respect due to a good devotee of *Lord Dattatreya.* People weren't aware of his double role and the depth to which he had sunk himself in shady deals.

Lord God, in his abundant mercy had gifted us with sufficien't ancestoral properties to lead a comfortable life, without the need to cheat self and the society. I pleaded with him to put a stop to his soul-sullying ways, but he was not prepared to reverse the course of the vehicle of his harmful and horrid habits.

We had some saints visiting us. They were all supposed to be top class ones, well versed in all the *vedic* lore. Atleast that's what the society thought of them. One of them even adorned the holy seat of a *Shankaracharya*. I implored them also to intercede and pump some sanity into the head of my father who was heading the family to hell by his heinous ways, but unfortunately all of them seemed to be interested only in the comforts which our black money provided them and the frequent gifts which they managed to knock out of us in the name of some humanitarian activities or the other. Like all bad people who have to give away monies for various causes in order to pose to be good and charitable, my father also gave generously from his easy earnings.

After a few years, my pious mother died. With her untimely death, misfortune began to visit my father. There was slump in business.

His health started to impair. He incurred debts, creditors harassed him, properties had to be sold, friends and relatives turned their backs on him and the banks refused him over-drafts. Because his economical circumstances were changing for the worst, the selfish *sadhus* also forsook him. My father who was once wanted everywhere and by everyone wasn't any more welcomed anywhere. He was discarded by the society, just as birds abandon the dried lake. He became worried and began to age rapidly. He could no more eat well and sleep wouldn't come to him without the doze of tranquilizers. He no more got himself locked-up in the *pooja* room.

One morning, immediately on waking up, he told me to arrange to dispose away through sale our house and the five acres of land that were left over and pay off the other remaining creditors. Though he did not divulge to me, he seemed to have some plan cooking in his head. He appeared to have gained new strength and had determined over something. Haply, the merciful God was guiding him. I obeyed him and made necessary arrangements. Because we were flat financially and because our name had circulated as prominent debtors there was no clamour for the purchase of our properties.

Finally, as we were in a hurry, we had to dispose off our otherwise valuable properties at throw away prices.

Anyway, I was happy my prayers were being heard and my father was improving. Within a month he was free from all the bad habits to which he was a pitiable slave. As a sign of true repentance, he displayed in various parts of our house placards containing his address to conscience in acrostics :—

Counsellor wise ! what a raw deal have I all along given thee,
Oft have I wilfully ignored thy prudent advises, selflessly given to me,
Nay, I even went to the extent to roughly upon thee fie.
Still thou kept on and yet keep on serving me without grouse or fee.
Chose had I, to act according to thy counsels, valuable and fine,
I would have escaped all the pangs without need now to pine.
Emulative is thy code of conduct, you serve with thoughts unrested on gain,
None but you, convinced am I, can save me from further wrongs & pain.
Conscience sire ! I can't but now admire your unique composure & ease,
Entreat thee I, kindly bear with me, don't thou forsake me please.

After a few days, we went to *Rameshwar*, one of the popular places of pilgrimage in south India and from there to *Kanya Kumari*. We liked the famous centre in that province and, as such, we decided to stay there for some days. From *Kanya Kumari*, we were booked to visit *Vajreshwari*, near Bombay, to meet a *yogi*. In affluent days, people resort to dames, drinks and dices and when the bad weather of hard-times visits them, they run after shrines, saints and Saviour. How bad! we ungrateful beings remember God, the Giver of life, only when failures and frustrations face us.

During our halt in *Rameshwar*, we went out daily to bathe in the sea, both in the mornings and evenings. One evening, we went to the sea side as usual for our bath. We entered into the water as on previous occasions, went up to the point where it was waist deep and took few dips. Then we began doing little swimming. There were good many others also swimming and fishing. All of a sudden, my father took a lengthy plunge towards the deep waters and went on moving ahead with quick breast-strokes. He was a good swimmer and there was no cause for panic. But as he kept on moving too far and was nearing the danger pole, I became apprehensive and shouted and waved to him to return. Others who were there also joined me, but he didn't turn back. Soon, came a running lap of waves surging high and with it the body of my father tossed a little and went down, never to come up again. Before I could beg for help, the game was over. The people there sympathetically told me that the way my father was seen going, it was evident that he was going to end himself. "A drowning man can be saved, but one who wantonly goes to meet death in the high seas can't be rescued," some seasoned swimmers said, sighing sadly. My father had put an end to his existence. It was of considerable concern and consequence to me. Whether it was an elective end or escapists' extinction, I knew not.

I returned to the shore and put on my clothes, collected those of my father and went to the police station for reporting the incident. As is usual with the cops, instead of giving me a patient hearing first, they began bullying me with the 'how', 'why', 'where' and 'what' – with refercnce to the unforeseen episode. Thereafter I returned to the hotel. While rummaging the pockets of the clothes of my father which he had put on at the time of going to the sea, from one of them I found a note whereon it was written :—

> Dear Son,
>
> Call it cowardly or what you like, the truth of the matter is, wanting a new body and a changed environment to start again, I have done what I have.
>
> May all those who have suffered through me losses or other privations forgive me.
>
> Don't feel dejected or rejected. Lord God, the Father of the Universe. will take care of you. Allow Him to lead, others' help you will not need.
>
> Your dead dad.

After two more days' stay at *Kanyakumari*, I returned back to *Cochin*. Somehow, I no more wanted to stay there. So, I wound up my affairs there and went to *Vajreshwari*, the place which I was to visit in the company of my late father. Talks were afloat in *Kerala* that a great mystic lived there and that he was himself from *Trichur*, also in *Kerala*. I was in need of solace and guidance; I thought that perhaps I might get them there.

Vajreshwari soothed me and the *mahatmaji* who was there, gazed at me on my approaching him and addressed me as '*Vishvaprem*' and smilingly kept mum. When I went to him a few times again, he took no notice of me. Large crowds of people came from *Bombay* on Sundays with material wants. He talked less and that too in his own lingo. He was fond of feeding and clothing poor children and that he did lavishly from the gifts which Bombay businessmen brought.

It was while I was camping there that I was directed in a dream to come to this place and remove the bornze image of *Lord Dattatreya* from the dry well near here and propitiate it with a particular *mantra*. At first, I didn't take the dream seriously. The instructions were repeated to me twice again, also in dream. Acting upon it, I first came to *Itwa*, the village which is seven miles from here, and from there to this place. I received invisible guidance to locate the well and this holy bronze statue which you now see installed here. The first few months I spent eating regular food which I cooked myself with the stored provisions I bought from the money I had with me. The begining was difficult. I spent the nights here on different trees and during the day–time I remained on the ground. When I became moneyless, I used to visit the nearby cattle farms for milk. The shepherds were so loving that they were even prepared to bathe me with milk. I pulled on for two more months, subsisting myself exclusively on milk and honey. In my spare time, I started digging this cellar all by myself, bit by bit, and it took me full two years to give it the shape in which you now see it. It was the chiselling of the boulder which was somewhat irksome. With the passage of time, I got used to live on neem leaves and certain kind of oval shaped roots which are available in plenty here. Now, for the last five years I am living on a jelly prepared out of neem leaves, its flowers, fruits and the white juice from its trunks, mixed with ghee and a special herbal powder which most of the saints inhabiting this jungle usually take. I eat only four ounces of it in twenty-four hours. I feel quite fit. Once in three days, I go out to answer nature's call and only occasionally I urinate. I need very little sleep and I have never slept for more than two hours in a day all these years. Like others who live here, my sleeping time is also midday. I haven't fallen ill nor have I put on fat since I am on this jelly diet. It took me sufficiently long time to get used to it. I have also become immune to snake bites. He who sustaineth the entire creation, provides me also with my little needs through His agents from time to time. My stay here has been eventful. My spiritual practices have begun to pay and I am experiencing inner awakening and development.

In this jungle, there are several saints prosecuting their yogic sadhana. Because everyone of them happen to be engaged in their respective exercises and devotion, it is only perchance that we meet one another and have no time to know much about each other. The wild animals here haven't harmed any resident saint so far. I have had occasions to observe many of them freely mixing and fondling with lions, wolves, deers and jackals, cobras, and pythons. Not far from here is a *mahatma* who uses a live python for his pillow. There is also another old saint, perhaps the oldest resident of this jungle with a record stay of sixty years, who tends to the sick or wounded animals. The wounded animals' cry of pains conveys to him the emergency call and he rushes to their aid lovefully. Those that can walk the distance to his pit go there instinctively. I have had the privilege of accompanying the *mahatmaji* three or four times. The possibilities of true love are most magical indeed.

In the begining, the nights used to be too very noisy with the frightsome cries of very many animals renting the air. Now that we have been here quite long, they are no more a disturbing element. I have not gone out of this place since I came here and I have no need to," finished he, appraising us of the thrilling and informative account of himself and his surroundings.

Seth Narottamji wanted to ask some questions. Swami Vishvaprem permitted him to do so :—

Sethji : (1) .. We hear of people remaning without food and water for years. Is such a thing possible ?

Saint : .. .. Yes, in a particular physiological constitution, individuals are capable of drawing sustaining essences direct from space, but, we may be sure, such states have nothing to do with self-realization.

Sethji : (2) .. What is the secret of detached *karma* ?

Saint : .. .. That lies in performing actions with diligence and dedication to the Lord. The following mystic verses of the famous

George Herbert expresses it elaborately :—

Teach me my God and king,
In all things Thee to see;
And what I do in anything,
To do it as for Thee.

A man that looks on glass,
On it may stay his eye;
Or if he pleaseth, through it pass,
And then the heaven espy.

All may of Thee partake;
Nothing can be so mean,
Which, with this tincture, for thy sake,
Will not grow bright and clean.

A servant with this clause,
Makes drudgery divine,
Who sweeps a room, as for thy laws,
Makes that and the action fine.

This is the famous stone,
That turneth all to gold,
For that which God doth touch and own,
Cannot for less be told.

Sethji . (3) . . What is true love ?

Saint : . . . . Sincere, spontaneous and selfless feeling of fondness for every living being in every conceivable situation without any reserve whatever, is what the wise term as true love.

Sethji : (4) ..At no time in the history of human existence have people all over the world lived in absolute harmony with each other. Judging from the past standards, therefore, do you honestly believe that in times to come. mankind as a whole would live lawfully and lovingly with one another ?

Saint : .. ..No. Due to different natures operating in individuals who are all in diverse stages of evolution, the type of desireable situation you look for may not come on a mass scale. But there will always be a class of people who can and will live in peace and understanding with one another.

Sethji : (5) ..What is your opinion about the effects of *brahmins* doing *japa* and prayers for others' welfare ?

Saint : .. ..The current day professional *brahmins* who are popular for their impiousness are simply cheating the gullible in the name of religious rituals. Blessings aren't bought, the effects of prayers aren't available for purchase and solace isn't sold. Without rational examination we should not accept as an actuality anything said by the *brahmins* who have cast to winds their high traditions.

Sethji : (6) .. We read in the *Upanishads* about *Yajnyavalkya* warning *Gargi* that her head will fall off if she asked too many questions. Does that really happen when one puts lots of questions to a saint ?

Saint : .. .. Oh no ! it is all wrongly understood. The allusion is to the head drooping in defeat. Heads never fall off, and get severed from the trunk. You may go ahead.

Sethji : (7) .. We accept and acknowledge Lord God as omniscient. Where then is the necessity for us to pray and voice our choice and needs ?

Saint : .. .. The wise don't pray for worldly objects. All prayers aren't really answered. Being endowed with the rational power to think, when we use it for reasonable prayers, it pleases the Lord.

Sethji : (8) ..Nature punishes the faulty and thereby purifies them. Won't we incur the displeasure of God if we prayed for the mitigation of the sufferings of the punished defaulters; I mean won't it amount to interfering with the fool-proof system of natural retribution ?

Saint : .. ..No, whether or not God grants such prayers is a different thing. But such a conduct purifies us and cements the growth of sympathy and fellow-feelings; of it there can be no doubt.

Sethji : (9) ..Is not flesh eating injurious to a seeker who is aiming at spiritual progress ?

Saint : .. ..Let's not be dogmatic. People who are so constituted physically as to assimilate and draw energy from the fleshy food take that diet and there are numerous among the non – vegetarians who were truly divine. Lord Jesus, Prophet Mohammed, Lord Buddha, Lord Krishna, Lord Rama, Shri Ramkrishna Pramahamsa, & Shri Aurobindo are some of the glaring examples. All vegetarians aren't *satwic.* There are demons among them also. So you see, it is more of a habit than sin or virtue. From a purely practical point of view, if everyone became staunch vegetarians overnight, there will not be enough food to go round and the cheap vegetables will become too very expensive and will be within the reach of purchase by the rich only. With the increase of agricultural resources, however, as in the past, people would surely take to vegetarian food. Till then, we needn't decry the 95% of HINDUS who subsist on the dead flesh of dirty animals.

Sethji : (10) . . Which part of *India* do you think is, in your opinion, more congenial for progressive spiritual pursuits ?

Saint : .. ..Any part in *India* is good enough for an awakened soul for communion with the omnipresent Lord. But the *Gir* jungles in the plains around *Junagadh* in *Saurashtra* and the whole of *Himalayan* ranges are atmospherically much more conducive for quicker spiritual awakening.

Sethji (11) ..Can't a non-initiate pursue spiritual practices and progress ?

Saint : .. ..No. Formal initiation is necessary by an able preceptor. Otherwise, an aspirant might come to harm or his *sadhana* may not fructify.

Sethji (12) ..How can one recognise an able advisor in spiritual matters ?

Saint : .. ..Truly speaking, at a proper time, a proper guide comes into the life of an aspirant. One needn't run about sorting and selecting spiritual masters. At an opportune time *Bhagwan* Ramana Maharshi and Shri

Aurobindo received requisite guidance when they were ready to respond. We must first prepare ourselves by becoming humane.

Sethji : (13) ..In which way does a spiritual guide really help an aspirant ?

Saint : .. ..In all the ways. The preceptor determines the type of *sadhana* that will suit the mental and intellectaul constitution of the *sadhaka* by studying his aptitude. Then, he prompts and inspires him to faithfully pursue the practices.

Sethji : (14) ..When can an individual be said to be progressing ?

Saint : .. ..In the measure one grows in goodness and experiences mental calmness, in every conceivable situation, to that extent he can be said to have progressed.

Sethji : (15) ..What does one gain out of self-realization ?

Saint : .. ..Full freedom from earthly bondage, tranquility, detached attitude & oneness of vision.

Sethji's questioning ended. He felt very much satisfied. with the wise replies of the venerable Vishvaprem.

Like all advanced yogis who have stilled their minds, Vishvaprem also sat erect and still. He replied to all the questions with the ease of a person who was well informed on all matters. What was of special interest to me about his bearing was his brilliant eyes – the calm and steady eyes of one who is habituated to deep and prolonged meditation.

Vishvaprem next turned to me and said, "we have talked a lot; let's now meditate together." We three spent about an hour or so in silent meditation – barring the entry of external thoughts we contemplated on the supreme – self. I experierienced an added bliss in meditating with him. Incidentally, as I am writing this, I am reminded of the Venerable Shri Dattabal of *Kolhapur*, who at the time of my parting from him on 29th March, 1967, had also said, "we have talked a lot, let's meditate together when we next meet." May the Lord speed that day. Meditating in the company of evolved souls acts as a fillip to our spiritual growth.

The venerable Vishvaprem rose up, raised me and Seth Narottamji by our hands and asked us to leave him. I felt that the send-off came a bit too soon. I had a few things to thrash out with him, but I had to put them off for another occasion. As we parted from outside, finding me hesitant, Vishvaprem very kindly remarked, "we are not parting for ever. We shall again meet; I will send for you."

He was gracious enough to call me again twice. On both those occasions I had met him alone as per his express instructions. He is to come out of seclusion after he completes thirty-two years of unbroken stay there.

Let's not commit the mistake of thinking that we profit only from those saints whom we see, hear or know. There are also others whom we know not, might never meet or chance to hear, but who yet are sending out inspiring thought-currents from different corners of the country and various parts of the world for our awakening, growth and final fulfilment. Without doubt, the veneable Vishvaprem is one such saint.

REBIRTH REVEALED :

Because we are prone to blindly believe all that is written in the scriptures, without fully understanding their esoteric purport, and to reject all that isn't revealed in them, and not to accept what we don't understand, and not to labour to investigate with a view to sanely understanding. and to adamently choose to believe differently, that is why we know so little about religion and that too, all wrongly.

For its functioning, a truth needs no support by way of belief from us – incomplete and ignorant beings. It stands by its own right.

Our common day to day experiences are sufficient, if we care to objectively examine them, to prove the rational doctrine of rebirth. All the diversities which we find in this vast world are by themselves positive proofs which establish, beyond all reasonable doubts, the most intelligent belief of reincarnation. For, otherwise, it may be rightly argued as to why should one be born of rich parents, while another in extreme wanting conditions ? People with better qualities and capabilities are found rotting in the lower rungs of official positions, whereas, mugs occupy high chairs and go about dictating. People who labour less get more dividends, as against those who sweat and toil without even getting enough to eat. Chidlren born of the same parents exhibit contrasting tendencies and talents; the good suffers, the vile enjoys, promising young-men die early and the suffering aged persons who wish to depart have to drudge on. From the foregoing, we can safely hold that effects of the past merits-good or bad-alone are responsible for the favourable and unfavourable situations which attend upon one's life from time to time.

If we have not existed before, why do we all fear death ? How would we explain the various tendencies, latencies and subtle emotions which motivate us to action ?

The very fact that all our actions don't bear fruits right away in the present birth, and at the same time because we also confront ourselves in circumstances for which we haven't worked in the present, are all indicative of the correct position that we are not only living on our past credits, but also that we carry forward our *karmas* for the future birth.

To negate rebirth just because we don't remember our past lives would as well amount to refuting our infancy which also we don't remember. Due to weak memory curtain, the functions of our mind, body and intellect, don't come to gain an indelible imprints in our sub-conscious mind. That apart, ordinarily a soul takes considerable time to reincarnate as a human-being. This can also be another reason why most of us don't generally remember our past.

Amongst the innumerable authenticated cases of individuals remembering their past, we come across mostly children in their pre-adoloscent age group and probably they are instances of immediate rebirth. Of yogis, however, we need have no doubt that to them stand revealed their own and also others' past and future lives.

Knowledge of the events of our past lives, particularly if they happen to be bad and adverse, can make our present life unbearable. Why not therefore take it that nature has wisely withheld the knowledge of our past in order that we may live in greater harmony in the present.

Belief born out of true understanding of the factual theory of reincarnation, would save us the pangs of possible frustrations in the face of our particular acts not bringing in the anticipated fruits and because of it. the possible wrong inducement to inaction also.

You will read in these pages the astounding case of an ascetic who accurately foretold his death and rebirth with a changed sex.

At the close of the year 1953, I visited *Jagannathpuri*, in *Orissa*, in the company of two casual acquaintences from *Gauhati* in *Assam*. Because it was a non-seasonal period of the year, there weren't much crowds in that popular place of pilgimage and hence, we managed to obtain for ourselves good lodging facillities.

The two who had accompanied me, chose to stay separately because they rightly felt that their ways and habits would clash with my likes. I made my own arrangements for a good room in a quiet locality enjoying the sea view. We, however, met daily, for a brief spell only, both in the morning and evening. They had come with high hopes. Someone had wrongly informed them that I was a good clairvoyant and that if they stuck to me for a few days, they might chance to make a fortune either by way of getting hints from me about some hidden treasure or through revelation of the winning figures of the New York cotton features. Therefore, their talks with me, only centered around gaining riches overnight. All my efforts to convince them to the contrary, not only failed, but that made them to feel all the more sure that I did really possess occult powers, which, if I chose, I could operate in their favour. Placed in situations where people expect too much from us, can be very nagging and pretty difficult to maintain one's level - headedness. Atleast, I had failed.

One day, as usual, I returned to my room after taking food in the temple and was preparing to meditate, as is my practice to do so for forty minutes immediately after my lunch everyday, either lying down or seated erect. At that time, my eyes strayed on to the farther foot - paths overlooking my room and found a burly bearded beggar - like person seated under the midday sun. He was not there the day before.

I had with me some fruits which the local visitors had brought for me. As they were of no use to me, I thought of giving them to him. There were four apples, five oranges and six sweet lemons. I put them all in a bag and went to him. He was a fat man, not the pot - bellied type, and he appeared to be around sixty years. His upper body was draped with a dirty overcoat and around his waist was wrapped a coarse piece of yellow cloth with multiple stains on them. He seemed engrossed in thoughts. As I reached him, he bade me to sit. Because I had gone there only to give him the fruits and return and because also the place around him was too very filthy for one to sit, I was going to empty the bag and walk away. But he stopped me and remarked with a chuckle, "no, no, you needn't sit here, doing so will dirty your clean clothes on your dirt filled body." I felt humbled and saw in him a man of enlightenment. Brushing aside his earlier remarks, as though, to my wonderment he asked me to go into the adjacent lane and give the sweet lemons in the bag to an old lady who was staying there in a lone hut with her ailing son. He was another clairvoyant I chanced to come in contact and I thought he may not remain there till I returned back from the interior of the lane and that I might miss his company. To my relief and added astonishment, he reassuringly said, "I can't go away, I have to talk to you."

I went to the hut in the lane pointed out to me. It wasn't so very near as I had understood him to have said. There was an old lady there indeed. I went up to her and gave her the sweet lemons and the apples; keeping back the oranges for my new spiritual find who had no dentures. I told the old lady that the fruits were sent by a babaji who was sitting on the road way foot-path. She was surprised. She knew of no such babaji. She said, "I was certainly in need of sweet lemons for my son who is down with typhoid but then I have not spoken of my need to anyone save God. well, I take it that Lord God who is omniscient and omnipresent has heard my prayers and because he works through the human agency, he has sent the fruits to me through the babaji you speak of, may He bless you both to be His useful instruments

I returned back. The babaji was there. Before my return, he had cleaned a portion of the place and asked me to sit. It was embarrassing but I had no choice. I sat down there. As soon as I did so, he said, "I have an assignment for you. At 10.55 hours tomorrow morning, I shall be discarding this physical vestment. I want you to give the body a formal burial on the sea-shore here." Then he brought out a paper packet from an inner pocket of his overcoat and placing the same in my hands continued, "two tenors and three two rupees notes are in this packet. You will please spend them on my burial material and labour charges."

It was interesting to observe him speaking about death with the casualness of describing a person entering in and out of his house at his sweet will. I had no doubt that he only said what he had meant and seriously meant what he had said. But I felt it absurd that a person of his spiritual attainment, who in his detached consciousness for the externals, neglected the comfort cum cleanliness of his body, should be so very particular about the manner of its disposal when it became lifeless and therefore useless. So, I entreated him to explain. He said, "the truth of the matter is, the various modes of disposal of the dead bodies have been designed to prevent the poltergeists from taking wrongful possession of the vacant bodies. Till the putrefication takes place, there is always the possibility of the occurence of possession. The astral body itself keeps hovering around for about three days to check such an eventuality. It is our duty to take the necessary precaution. The syatem of cremation is the most safe and hygienic method compared to that of burial and the practice of embalming."

Proceeding further, He said, "there is one more thing which I want to tell you and that is, on 25th February 1954, that is, exactly after two months from today, I shall be reborn as a girl in a family of black-smiths in a suburb of Calcutta. I shall live till I am sixteen years in that feminine frame. That will be my final birth," concluded he. Here again I was inclined to believe his statement, but the part which dealt with the birth taking place in two months was something contrary to the prevalent medical opinion. Normally, we are told, that a soul has to spend 266 days in the womb of the mother. Premature birth itself does not take place, it is said, before five months of pregnancy. I was confused. I didn't ask him to clarify–I just could not.

After that, he clapped my shoulders with his hands and said again, "O. K. then, we meet tomorrow morning at 10·15 hours near the *Marwari Dharmashala.*" I had been taught that unless permitted to do so, to simply hang on and pester the saints with questions isn't a commendable habit. So, I went back to my room.

Back in my room I became restive, all my thoughts rested on the *babaji* and all that he had told to me. I couldn't attend to my work. Anyway, I did feel happy that I came in touch with the *babaji*. Like many great souls who, intent upon preserving their hard earned spirtual progress, move around like mad people and that way ward off the troublesome and the worldly crowds by not coming into lime light. They know the two imposters, PRAISE & POPULARITY as capable of pulling down the spiritual seekers from the heights of their attainments.

With a view to avoiding those two persons who came with me to *Puri*, I left my room that evening, somewhat earlier and instead of going to the sea-shore, straight as usual, I walked towards the Railway Station. At the time of my leaving I didn't find the *babaji* on the opposite foot-path. On reaching the station, I happened to see him there, seated in the crowded third class waiting hall. Not too far from him were two males and three females partaking some light refreshments. They appeared to dislike the dirty *babaji's* presence near them. Little later, the *babaji* got up and going near them asked them to give him something to eat. They harshly hooted him out. I felt hurt at that sight. From the external evaluation of his conduct there, I in my ignorance of the saints' enigmatical ways, thought him to be hungry. So, I went up to him and taking him by the hand led him to the refreshment stall with a view to providing him with some eatables. Stopping me from doing so, he said, " I am not hungry. By begging for food from those passengers, I was only giving them an opportunity to cultivate pity and fellow-feelings. I was trying to teach them to give, share and part if they wished to receive and rejoice. But those unfortunate souls couldn't share with me either their food or feelings. " As he made movements to go away, I requested him to spend the night with me in my room, but he very politely declined.

On my return to my place and before I went to bed, I looked for the *babaji* on the foot-path. He wasn't there. I knew not where he slept or whether he slept at all.

Next morning I went for my usual sea-bath and by the time I was free after my daily routine work, it was 0930 hours. Because the sea-side locality where I stayed was a bit far from the *Marwari Dharmashala*, where I had to go to see the soul vacating the physical body, I left soon and reached there by 10·00 hours.

A little before quarter past ten, the *babaji* came. He was as gay as he was on the previous midday when he had talked to me about his proposed departure from the body. How wonderful! he knew the subtle secrets of the transmigration of the soul. It is only because of ignorance that we fear death. The very first thing he said was to get him some green coconuts and insisted that I pay for them from the amount he had given to me to meet the burial expenses. I bought four coconuts for twelve annas and helped him to drink the water and eat its soft and creamy kernel. After that good fill, he belched with satisfaction.

Thereafter, he made me to sit with him under an electric lamp post on the road-side and said, "I forgot to tell you yesterday about the processes involved in reincarnation. Now listen, the tenuous astral body or the body of impressions and impulses which never dies, enters into the body of the future mother, allotted according to one's *karmas*, between the seventh and eighth month of her pregnancy. There it merges with the live 'physical case that has come into formation from the combination of ovum and sperm cells. You can call it a blank body of blood, bone and flesh, nourished to grow in the womb through the mother's soul-force and fed by the building essences passed through the umbilical cord. It is only after the merger of the astral body with it that the unborn baby begins to experience pain plus pleasures and remembers its past lives. After the birth of the baby, the umbilical cord is cut off and from thenceonwards, the baby derives sustaining energy and life-current from the subtle body that has taken over and this is made possible through the silver-cord that is joined to its physical one. No sooner the subtle body severes itself away from the physical body, then the fleshy frame becomes inert, stiff and begins to putrefy and we name this phenomenon as DEATH. This much is sufficient. You needn't load your head with the knowledge relating to premature births that occur due to biological abnormalities in the mother.

" Alright then, " he continued and added, " I must now get going. Remember the date, 25th February 1954, I shall be reborn in the house of Harimohan, the only black-smith living in *Behala, Calcutta.* My sixteen years of life with that family is not going to be eventful. I am to lead a normal life with suspended spiritual powers and activities. I might even be denied elementary education." He rose, gave me a few parting pats on my back and asking me not to follow him immediately, walked away in the direction of *Jagannathji's* temple. There was still five minutes to 10·55 and he walked slowly, consistent with the conduct of a person who has renounced the world.

Because it was a main road with good many shops on its flanks, he was lost to my sight by peoples' movement. At a point which must have been a little more than a furlong from where I was standing, I saw people crowding. That was the time for me to move. I rushed to the place. *Babaji* was lying there. He was stiff and cold. The police came and prepared the papers. Nothing was found on his person. Some shop-keepers said that they used to see the man sometimes moving about like a mad person. Few members from the temple staff claimed to have found him many times seated on the footsteps leading to the main temple. But none from the crowd knew him to be a saint that he was. Because the people in *Puri* only knew him to be a mad man who subsisted on begging, the police naturally concluded that it was a case of natural death, which it really was, due to heart-failure.

I approached the police and told them that I came in touch with the dead person on the day before and that he had foretold about his death and had instructed me to attend to the burial of his dead body at his expense. I also told them that I had been given by him a sum of Rupees twenty-eight for the purpose. The police people first subjected me to a good deal of questioning with a view to satisfy themselves about my bonafides. Those two guys from *Gauhati* who had come with me, were called and questioned about me. In the end, they passed on the dead body of *babaji* to me for the last rites.

With the help of my witnesses; I got the dead body transported to the sea shore and buried the same in the way as was desired by the *babaji*. After the burial, there was an excess of Rs. 9-12-0 which I distributed amongst some needy persons.

When the two persons learnt from me about the greatness of the *babaji* they remonstrated against their not having been introduced to him. They had been in *Puri* for about five days with no results to their advantage and hence, they were obliged to return back and that they did so without informing me.

After a few more days stay in *Puri*, I travelled in *Orissa*, *Bihar* and *Assam* and on 20th February 1954. I reached *Calcutta*. On the following day I visited Hari Mohan, the blacksmith, and in a befittng way I told him sbout the soul of a *mahatma* having chosen to reincarnate at his place as a baby girl. He was pleased to hear it and he said, "my wife dreamt about giving birth to a baby girl. But with what motive you have coloured it with a *mahatma's* soul, I understand not. The date, time and place of birth stated to have been given to you by the *mahatma* himself, at such an incredible period of 56 days earlier, appears that you are good at cooking-up stories during sleepless nights. Whatever be it, I am afraid you will go all wrong. My wife has just crossed the eighth month and she has been sent to her parents' place for delivery. So you see, the birth of the baby girl at my place on twenty-fifth instant is impossible. To be plain, I still don't see why you, a neutral member of the society who should be striving to overcome birth and death, have shunted yourself all the way from *Puri* to *Calcutta* with an extra interest in the impending birth of a baby at my place. Without arguing with him and still full well sure that what the *babaji* had said can't go wrong, I left him.

On the 25th morning, I again went to Hari Mohan's house. He welcomed me with sincere respeets and said, " well, *Maharaj*, your information about the birth destined to take place here might come true. My wife was brought here for medical consultation and she is presently here. The doctors have opined yesterday about the possibility of her delivering today." I stayed on. The women were inside the house attending upon Harimohan's wife and exactly at 12–00 p. m. she gave birth to a baby girl. The soul of *babaji* had reincarnated. There must have been some very powerful past ties witth the Harimohans for him to have taken birth in that poor house. Harimohan was an ordinary worldly type of man with no liking or leisure for religion. Nohing could be immediately known about his uneducated wife.

My next visit to Hari Mohan's house was in the year 1959. There I met the little girl on her 5th birthday. The parents had named her Rekha. She was of a rather dark complexion and fairly good looking. Her father told me that she wasn't troublesome, playful or in any other way abnormal.

On 16th March 1967 when I again met the fourteen year Rekha, I learnt that since the last five years she usually got up early and after ablutions etc., she spent an hour or so in a small temple near their house. Rekha was quite healthy and of cheerful countenance. Her parents further told me that she feared nothing. One day, it was said, that she caught hold of a snake and was found playing with it. When the frightened parents killed it, Rekha felt extremely sorry and didn't eat for two days. That was the only strange incident reported to me about her,

I have not thought it fit to inform the Harimohans that Rekha's real release from the birth–death rota will be in the wake of 1970, after she completes sixteen years.

True knowledge about matters intimately connected with life, death and rebirth will help us to rise above disappointments, anxieties. and worries.

We may yet profit from Herbert Spencer's remarks, "There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is a proof against all argument, and which cannot FAIL to keep a man in ever–lasting ignorance. That principle is 'CONDEMNATION WITHOUT INVESTIGATION.'

PAST PERCEIVED :

As said in an earlier article, after death, one generally takes a considerable time to be reborn as a human-being. It is held that those souls who cut short their lives by committing suicide, reincarnate immediately to fulfil the balance span of life on earth. Usually, it is only such souls who in childhood or before the attainment of adolescence, sometimes remember their past. Recently, Dr. Banerjee of *Rajasthan University*, *Jaipur*, in a series of ten articles on 'REBIRTH' published in the pages of "*Blitz*" gave us genuine instances of individuals who remembered their past. With the exception of one case in which a young man remembered the circumstances of his murder and recalled his murderer and showed a scar on his head, all the remaining nine cases were of children below sixteen years of age.

Because the cases of immediate birth occur solely to make the past suicides to complete their balance life, it is often found that those children who remember their past die a premature death. Astrology corroborates this reasonable inference.

Amongst the many cases of personal meeting with young and aged persons remembering their past, I give herebelow an interesting instance of a doctor's son who also was transported into his past. On the spot investigation proved its correctness to our entire satisfaction.

Mukeshkumar, aged ten years, was the only child of Dr. Padmakar, a private medical practioner in a town in the state of *Maharashtra*. His name is well known in that town as a medico who knows his job.

Some years ago, during the course of my tour in *Maharashtra*, I happened to be a guest of Dr. Padmakar to whom I was introduced by a mutual friend. From then onwards, I have been visiting his place annually.

One evening, I was seated with the doctor in his well kept small garden. One Shri Prabhakar Tripathi, a learned *brahmin*, came to give us his educative and blissful company as usual. The doctor's wife and the young Mukesh joined us a little later.

That evening, Shri Prabhakar talked to us about the ennobling effects of 'GOOD COMPANY.' He began, "Tulsidasji says. when in contact with the air, the dust soars higher; but when it mixes with water it becomes mire. So also, when we are in the company of the wise and the saintly, we grow in virtue and evolve spiritually, whereas intimacy with the evil ones brings us down to the last rungs of bad conduct and sufferings."

"*Satsangh* means abiding in the company of the good, the virtuous and the pious. *Satsangh* in its subtle form is also to read and ruminate over and assimilate the vitalising teachings of the elevated ones with a view to imbibing and growing in the qualities of the exemplary saints and seers of the past."

"*Satsangh* trains us to live naturally, orderly and to pursue our day to day problems with a rational understanding. Company with the good pretermits pettinesses, prejudices plus predilections."

"*Satsangh* and goodness go together in a counter cum circular way. Unless we are good, and sincerely hanker to blossom in greater goodness, *Satsangh* which is generally gone through as a dead routine course will do us no good. So also, unless we cling to habitual *satsangh*, we can never know what is good and mayn't turn good. *Satsangh* alone teaches us all to tirelessly try to totally transcend the tortuous temporal temptations that tend to tarnish our glorious human birth."

"To achieve real happiness here and hereafter, we must assiduously and actively aspire to become good first. Growth in goodness is that fit state in which we can pursue peace promoting practices and positively progress to perfection."

As soon as Shri Prabhakarji had finished his enlightening talk on 'Good Company', Mukeshkumar's mother went into the house to get us lime juice.

In the meantime, Mukesh who was seated beside me, became convulsive and fell on the ground. The doctor turned nervy, went to his side and began examining Mukeshkumar who was never before a victim to that sort of attack. Mukeshkumar lay expressionless.

Not long after, with his eyes closed, Mukeshkumar spoke "why aren't you all allowing me to go to my home. Take ye me forth-with to my worried wife. She needs consolation which I alone can give. Please don't torment me any more by keeping me with you all."

The doctor looked at me, wanting to know as to what could be the matter with

Mukeshkumar who was talking that way. I in turn, turned to Prabhakarji, seeking his explanation. Whereupon Shri Prabhakar seriously questioned the boy thus, "Who are you?" "I am Raghunath Katti, the tobacco merchant of Kopergaon", said Mukesh. When asked "can you show us your house?" The boy sneeringly said, "Of course yes, as easily as you can show me your nose."

Unaware of what had happened to Mukesh, his mother came with five glasses of cold drinks. The scene she saw, staggered her and in that state she let go the grip of the tray and everything which it had held went down breaking and spilling. She was told by Prabhakarji that her son was in a spell of past awareness and that he should be taken to the town named by him. He also advised the doctor and his wife not to disturb the boy for sometime from the lawn where he lay in what may be said to be a semi-conscious state.

The doctor sent his servant to call a local friend of his with the car. Within a quarter of an hour, a car drove in and from it stepped down one Mr. Bapat. We were to be motored by him to the town where Mukesh's wife of previous birth lived.

The doctor and his wife sat in the rear seat with Mukeshkumar and I took the front one with the owner. Mr. Bapat started the vehicle and it sped on. He changed the gears like a person who is under training. He was careering the car in lower gear for a top-gear speed and made an awful mess when turning right – the most difficult manoevres the drivers are required to make. Neither did he look in the mirror to take notice of the cars following from the rear nor did he signal his intention to turn, before turning. I didn't tell him anything, for, a Hindu monk is not supposed to know anything about car-driving. The increased number of car accidents in the country are mainly due to unfit people like Mr. Bapat, managing to get licences to drive.

We reached *Kopergaon* and Mukeshkumar was guiding Mr. Bapat. We had to take good many turns. When we reached near a particular narrow lane, Mukesh jubilantly said, "driver sahib ! you needn't take the car any further; my house lies in this lane. Leave me here and go back all of you." We had to coax him to permit us all to accompany him upto the entrance of his former house. We hadn't to walk long. As we were passing a row of houses, Mukeshkumar side stepped and started knocking on a closed door, hailing at the sametime "Kumudhini! I have come, open the door." We were watching and weighing the demeanour of Mukesh whose behaviour was like a grown-up man of experience.

The door opened and holding both its edges by outstretched hands stood a middle-aged lady with worry writ looks. Before she could ask us the purpose of our visit to her house, or before we chanced to tell her anything about it, the little Mukeshkumar collected her in his hands by her waist and asked her feelingfully, "Kumudh dear! why do you look so doleful?"

Kumudhini appeared to be all alone and Mukesh's affectionate embrace and address of endearment by him in the presence of rank strangers, made her feel very embarrassed. She extricated herself from the hold of Mukesh and wanted to know from us as to who we were and what had taken us to her house. Again, before Dr. Padmakar could clarify, Mukesh took the hands of Kumudhini into his own and interrogatively said to her, "why this indifference? Haven't you recognised me? I am your husband. You need not be cross with me this way. I have laid aside, under this pillar sufficient money to keep you going without wants," thus finished Mukesh, pointing to one of the teak – wood pillars that supported the upper storey of the house.

Then, Dr. Padmakar told Kumudhini, how his son Mukesh fell down with seizures of spasmodic contractions and recounted in that state his past ties with her.

Kumudhini didn't know what exactly to to make out of all that sort of conduct of the young boy who claimed to be her husband and about the hidden money he spoke of. She pried her reincarnate husband with perplexity. Hidden behind that perplexity could also be detected flashes of gladness over the chance of coming by that sweet stuff, excessive of which makes one's temperature of pride rise sharply and the deficiency of which makes one dull, dreamy and depressed. The mighty mister 'MONEY' methinks, masterly mesmerises and maddens mankind and entraps them in the massive magical net of infatuation for him.

By way of further proofs of his claim, Mukeshkumar satisfactorily answered a number of questions by Kumudhini relating to intimate incidents during the period when they were husband and wife. Mukesh spoke with the look of a person who had first hand experience of what he said. Of his own accord, Mukesh also informed and invited Kumudhini to recall when only three days, before one *Hanuman Jayanti* day, her expensive *Benares* saree caught fire while they were worshipping the family deity of silver image of *Hanuman* weighing about ten pounds. A good deal of safeguarded knowledge of her past married life having been kindled to remembrance, Kumudhini was feeling heavy at heart as she was fully convinced that the little lad was indeed her late husband reborn in doctor's house. She mused in surprise and took us all to the upper storey of her house.

Out of the different photos that were hanging in the sitting room there, Mukeshkumar picked out with glee his picture and that of his dead son who had passed away at the age of two. However saddening they may be, past history of self or others, is always entertaining and Kumudhini listened to everything which Mukesh said with an interest of a child listening to a thrilling story.

In a *Hindu* house, it is incumbent upon one to greet, meet and treat the visitors with sweet-speech, seat and water. As such, a dutiful lady that she was, Kumudhini excused herself to bring us some drinks and repast.

In the intervening time, a change took place in Mukesh's consciousness. He rubbed his eyes and rushed to his mother and questioned her, "Mother dear! where are we now? Has papa come here on a visit to see some ailing person? How is that uncle Bapat, we both and swamiji had to accompany daddy to this strange house? How did we come – I mean was I brought here while asleep?" Mukesh's mother quietened him by saying that we all were at a friend's place in *Kopergaon* and that we would soon be returning home.

Because his good mannered parents had taught him social – courtesies, when Kumudhini brought bread, butter and bourn – vita for us, Mukesh who had then become oblivion of his past relationship with her, greeted her, addressing her as aunty, as is customary to call an elderly stranger lady. Kumudhini also noticed the change in the boy. After taking light refreshments, we took leave of Kumudhini, Mukesh did a *namaste* and we drove back to doctor's place.

Mukeshkumar, I am informed, never thereafter talked anything about his past life or Kumudhini. I am also informed that when the portion below the pillar which was pointed out by Mukesh, was dug with the help of reliable men, a metal box containing twenty-thousand rupees worth of gold and diamonds was found. Fortunately for Kumudhini, this fortune came to her before the gold control order came into force in 1961.

If everyone of us knew everything about our past, it can cause considerable conflicts cum complexities in our present lives. However, favourable flashes of past can be of profit to one-self and others. Mukesh's remembrance of some matters of his past life, we have seen, was instrumental in bringing bountiful benefits to the broody Kumudhini.

PRAVINA'S PILGRIMAGE :

Seth Kasturbhai, a fairly well-known business man, lived with his wife Pravinaben, in a city of *Gujarat*. The couple were religious minded and good many saints periodically visited them. *Sethji* was a nice devotee of *Lord Krishna* and Pravinaben propitiated *Lord Shiva*. Ordinarily, in such a situation of conflicting beliefs residing under one roof it would have given rise to meaningless clashes and domestic discord between the couple. But *Seth* Kasturbhai and Pravinaben, by reason of their being the disciples of placid plus prudent preceptors, had good mutual understanding and hence lived in absolute harmony. They seemed to rightly believe that their religious susceptibilities and pursuits weren't limited to their present birth alone, but they had been pursuing devotional practices from births immemorable. They were rightly of the view that the line of the particular *sadhana* which each of them had followed in their past births would alone appeal and attract them in the present life and that every soul has past ties, as in huuman relations, with the Gods also. It was their firm conviction therefore, that fondness for different deities or religion need never come in the way of one's domestic relationship. That apart, their goal was the unique state of *Gita's* that spiritual perception in which a devotee definitely visualises all things existing in his Lord and the manifestation of Lord in all things.

To *Sethji*, religion meant 'a way of life' – a humane code of conduct with no compromise with the evil, and because he lived up to it in his day to day life, he could be said to be religious. His was a business house of long standing with heavy investments coming to him by way of direct legacy from his late father and he maintained the traditional tenets of 'FAIR BUSINESS' without indulging in the tricks of the trade out of common greed to make more and more money.

Side by side with his emulative qualities, *Sethji* held peculiar opinions about many things. While all of his admirers and associates were commercial members of one or the other modern international clubs, *Sethji* abhorred them all. He considered them to be places where one gets an upstart boost to one's ego, doing things in a patronizing way and falsely claiming to be championing the cause of the down-trodden and the distressed. At least that's what he felt about the clubs and their members in India. He said; whatever good one can do, it is best done with feelingful devotion and love without seeking publicity for one's benevolent deeds in the local papers. In order that one may not humiliate and embarrass those placed in bad circumstances, one should serve the needy by remaining incognito and respecting human feelings. He was of the view that such a conduct alone constituted the secret of service and sacrifice.

As it is a human necessity to have company, *Sethji* selected sane souls who, by virtue of their praiseworthy attainments of the head and heart, were fit to adorn the prefixes of 'His Holiness' or 'His Highness.' Experience had taught him, he said, that having ordinary people as friends is to rake one's head with the trifles and waste one's very precious time.

He wasn't a cine-fan and he labled the cine-stars as irresponsible creatures, using their best talents only to make riches by causing to present on the screen films which do no good but poison the young minds with self-debasing knowledge. He held them to be unfit for healthy friendship because they were also of cheap morals.

He hated cricket. In his opinion, a poor country like India, was foolishly wasting man-power and money at the cost of national growth by allowing 22 players in the field to make millions of people practically idle, very often, for five days in a year, at a time. Like the wise Americans and Russians, the *Indian* Government also, he opined, shouldn't encourage cricket which saps the economic progress of the country.

Sethji was a lover of light music and fine arts. He played flute occasionally – humming out melodies in praise of his divine *Lord Krishna.*

He cherished a very quiet life. Unlike the other well-to-do people, *Sethji* never talked on any and every subject like people who pose to know what in reality they never know. He harboured a great dislike for travels. As for pilgrimage, his desire to visit them was absolutely nil. Even as a *Vaishnavite*, at no time did he visit the grand ancient shrines dedicated to *Lord Krishna* – his personal deity. As a general rule, *Sethji* never went out after 8 p.m. He had no visitors either after that hour. In his life time, it was only once that he had to go to an out – station to see his wife who had fallen ill while she was in her parental place. He somehow got used to that sort of tight compartment living.

Pravinaben, on the other hand, feverishly loved to go out and see places. Atleast she had a particular fascination for visiting all the places of pilgrimage, but *Sethji* never took her out on a trip. He wasn't against her going with some friends or a party. There was a cogent reason why Pravinaben didn't want to leave her husband alone.

Sethji, out of his natural love and affection for his devout wife, was under a vow to take food cooked by his lovable wife only as long she lived. During her illness, however, he usd to cook himself. Even little items, like fruits and nuts, he ate only when they came from his wife's hands. My portrayal may seem exaggerated, but it is my impression of the truth. Never in his life time had he eaten in hotels. These places of eating, he said, had on their staff bad tempered and dirty persons to cook and serve eatables which are 'only apparently clean and wholesome.

A loving couple, even with all their fads, so lovefully attached to one another aren't too common in these days of selfish and false love rampant all over. It can't be said that both of them were ideal, but adjustable they really were. They truly valued peace and harmony and happiness of home and were ever prepared to pay the price for maintaining the sanctity of their wedded life. They had no children and they didn't go hunting for talismans or run after saints, shrines or sooth-sayers. In their awakened wisdom they knew that souls which had past ties with them would in the natural process of God's scheme of things come into their family fold. They thought it improper, therefore to pray to Gods for such worldly and perishable bonds.

As said earlier, Pravinaben was greatly obsessed with a deep desire to visit the various places of pilgrimage in the country and bathe her inner and outer-self in the pure and uplifting atmosphere over there. She knew the importance of pilgrimage. Trying to impress upon her husband the utility and the fine effects of pilgrimage, she used to say that places of pilgrimage, because of their association with the lives of great many ancient *rishis* and *munis* who radiated and surcharged the places with their spiritual currents by living there, are the best and ready spots where people with disrupted and discharged spirits should go for recharging themselves and for accelarating their onward spiritual progress. She seemed to know that thoughtful travels and pilgrimage prudently undertaken make one :—

Peaceful,
Innocent,
Loving,
Generous,
Reasonable,
Introvert,
Modest,
Adaptable
Gay and
Exemplary.

She endeavoured to persuade her husband to give the whole matter a second thought and condescend to take her on a pilgrimage. She wanted to begin from *Uttarkashi* in *U. P.* where she desired to first pay her homage to *Vimaleshwar Mahadev* – the deity with which she believed, she had ancient links. But like fastidious persons who are too adamant in their stands, *Sethji* also wasn't amenable to reason. Then she tried to bring her husband round with the help of saints whom tne *Sethji* held in high reverence. *Sethji* simply begged of the saints not to take him out on trips or force him againts his will to proceed on a pilgrimage.

Sethji was a *japa yogi* and kept himself busy with incantations. He very seldom read scriptural texts. But all the same, he was a good listener and with visible interest he heard all that was read out to him by his wife. He always said that to listen is to enlist. His wife started with reading a good deal about *Lord Krishna.* Then she read some printed matters dealing about the importance of pilgrimage. One day she received a very lengthy letter in *Hindi* from an acquainted *sanyasin* giving the following graphic description of *Uttarkashi* the beauteuos place which she so very much longed to visit.

"*UTTARKASHI* which is about 100 miles from *Rishikesh* is one of the principal places of pilgrimage in north India. It is associated with manifold *yagnas, yaagas,* habitation of innumerable ancient *rishis,* some very old temples and grim battles between the *devas* and the *asuras.* The confluent rivers of *Bhagirathi, Varana* and *Asi* add to the grandeur and purity of the place. Centrally situated at the bottom-most end and surrounded on all sides by the *Vaaranavath* mountain peaks, *Uttarkashi* is cut-off from the sight of other nearby places. The temples of *Vimaleshwar Mahadev* and *Dattatreya* on the eastern *Vaaranavath* hill attract good many saints and *sadhakas* of retiring temperament. The giant mountain-peaks, apparently kissing the high spatious sky, seemingly depict the glorious state of the union of the individual soul with that of the cosmic one. The sandy waters of the *ganges* roughly meandering through the crevices of the joined rocks lying in the river makes a soul-soothing sound and sight. The uniform and harmonions rythm of its fast flowing foamy water seems to exhort us to cultivate constant communion with the infinite with just such restless persistence and unbroken continuity.

The thickly peopled tall greeny Christmas trees add to the magnificence of *Uttarkashi.* Multicoloured little houses dwarfed by distance present a very pleasant appearance. Likewise, scores of *ashrams* perched precariously on preciptious slopes are most picturesque indeed.

The main attraction here is the bliss-permeating presence of hundreds of saints. While a good many of them are ,still on the march, there are some who have acquired appreciable advancement.

The nights are a bit cool and the faint silvery sky is often moonless. So also, very seldom does *Uttarkashi* witnesses round the day lasting bright sunshine of a cloudless or a mistless day.

Climatically and atmospherically compared to other places near and around *Rishikesh*, *Uttarkashi* is still, to a very vast extent, free from turmoil and as such could be branded as one of the congenial training grounds for all sincere spiritual seekers. More so also, because the atmospheric vibrations here are still so arrestingly inspiring, that prayers and meditations come to be performed with ease, naturalness and spontaneity of breathing.

To them who are heavily laden by their self-invited worldly burdens, *Uttarkashi* offers a soothsome respite and recharges them with the requisite mental strength to boldly face the odds of the evanescent earthly existence.

Though not full with our so called comforting conveniences, the local inhabitants, the *Garhwallis* on these sides–are much more mirthful and merry. Their triple traits of TRUE AFFECTION, COMRADESHIP and HONESTY are worthy of emulation by those living in the plains who are wrongly said to be cultured cum civilized.

Uttarkashi is connected by a regular

public bus service from *Rishikesh.* Private taxis are also available and it is a ten hours monotonous and dangerous run. The narrow, weak and the winding road with many steep ascents, slopes and sharp curves records few serious accidents every year.

The best season to visit *Uttarkashi* is from the begining of May to the and of September.

With best wishes for a safe and blissful trip."

She prayed to *Lord Vimaleshwar* to create compelling conditions for her husband to take her on a pilgrimage. She believed in the extra merit which is said to accrue from religious activities jointly undertaken by faithful couples. At long last, when she could no more bear the freezing attitude of her husband towards the holy places of pilgrimage, she in her human dejection and impatience took to the *Gandhian* strategy of fasting. Because crying cum complaining come to women easily, she augmented her fasts with womens' winning weapon – 'weeping and wailing.' All this simply ended in *Sethji's* undertaking a counter – fast and going out for a drive the moment Pravinaben began to cry. Because *Sethji* treated her tears as just a few drops of hydrogen oxide and a pinch of salt, Pravinaben couldn't continue clamorously crying.

Pravinaben had on her side a genuine sympathiser. She was one Sumatiben who was her fast friend from her childhood. They both were active participants in the college dramatic group and had graduated together. Sumatiben's husband, Shri Bhudisagar, was a bright barrister. Pravinaben implored Sumatiben to help her. The crafty Sumatiben hatched a plan capable of bringing to fruition Pravinaben's cherished desire to proceed on a *Himalayan* pilgrimage.

According to the plan, Shrimati Bhudisagar advised Pravinaben to behave strangely and imitate as though possessed by some evil spirit. Sumatiben promised to manage the rest. Fully confident that the whole plan would work out in her favour, Pravinaben, in her intense desire to go on a pilgrimage to the various sacred places with her husband, agreed to indulge in a little evil for a greater good.

Accordingly, from a Monday morning, the serious tempered Pravinaben started to play the part assigned to her by her well-wishing friend. With naturalness and ease, Pravinaben put on a frightful appearance by remaining grave with outdrawn eyes and looking in one direction only for a long while. That very first sight made *Sethji* funky. *Sethji* seized her by the shoulders and shaking her forcefully, demanded in emotional tones, " what's wrong with you, Pravina? Oh' why don't you speak? Please now, come – come, say something. " Pravinaben simply stared straight.

Her next enactment was to drop on the floor with a convulsive fit. With rare skill of a talented artiste, she performed it. Her lips began to tremble, teeth crunched and her hands clenched tightly. Then, with a shiverish quiver she shook her limbs, cringed a bit with contraction and fell flat on the ground, frothy spittle oozing out of her mouth.

The cunning Sumatiben who had briefed Pravinaben with the devilish role, came to meet her, as planned, with the usual casualness. She found Pravinaben on the floor crouched in a state of apparent spasm and her sad husband helplessly looking on. Sumatiben brought on herself looks of genuine surprise and concern. " What's all this, brother? asked she and before *Sethji* could speak, she was beside Pravinaben trying to lift her up. Enraged by a detesting touch, as though, Pravinaben sprang upon Sumatiben, making her hands appear like the grabby paws of a lioness and snarled, "you dirty witch, I will tear you to pieces – don't you know me?" Sumatiben ran into the kitchen with frightened shrieks of "Oh! – my! my!" Pravinaben sank upon the floor and lay there in assumed exhaustion,

The unnerved *Sethji* went into the kitchen to soothe Sumatiben. He gave her water to drink. Pretending to collect herself, she gulped little water from the glass and said, "I just came in to enquire as to how much African honey Pravinaben wanted. I didn't expect to witness all this frightsome sight. Myself and Pravinaben are friends from childhood; I have never seen or heard of her being attacked by apoplexy. Looking at the way she came at me growling something, I am inclined to believe that something is dangerously wrong with her. I fear there are sure signs of her being possessed by some evil spirit. We must do something without loss of time and before dementia or impairment of consciousness overtakes her." They came out of the kitchen; Sumatiben asked *Sethji* not to go near his wife, and promising to call again, she drove off.

Sethji didn't know what to do – whom to go to. From what he himself saw and added to it what Sumatiben passingly said, *Sethji* felt that his wife's case wasn't for a Surgeon or a Physician to examine. It was too obvious – all her ways made it clear that she was possessed, thought he. Leaving his wife in the care of the maid – servant who had then come, *Sethji* went to Shri Bhudhisagar's bungalow The erudite couple were very seriously discussing some intricate point of Indian Contract and Specific Relief Act and about Modus Vivendi in a case. They welcomed him. Sumatiben hastened to say, "I was just returning back to your place, but your brother held me up to enlighten him on few legal points which had been worying his head for sometime." The jurist Shri Bhudhisagar said, "Sumati told me about the condition of pravinaben. It is saddening to hear such calamities befalling on persons whom we hold so dear. Please take my suggestion, there is one Raghunath maharaj – a pious *brahmin* who, we believe, is gifted enough to give people assistance in such cases. I asked Sumati to take you to him. I am sorry, I had to delay her to equip myself with little extra knowldge to silence that barrator of counsel appearing for the appellants. Then, turning to his wife, Bhudhisagarji said, "listen Sumati don't worry about my lunch or home. Attend upon Pravinaben. The scriptures enjoin and declare that, he who does not instantly give up all other engaging calls to zealously and actively attend to the immediate needs of his friend, invites disaster. So, go at once with *Sethji*. I shall join you all in the evening. O. K. then, good luck" so saying, Shri Bhudisagar hurried away.

Thereafter, Sumatiben took *Sethji* to Shri Raghunath Maharaj. That old and well meaning man gave them a talisman which, he said, if kept tied around the neck of the affected person, the spirit would leave within an hour. Seeing *Sethji* thrust his hand into his pocket, Raghunath Maharaj sweetly said that it was not his practice to accept any money for that sort of services. *Sethji* thanked that man of God and returned home with Sumatiben.

At home, they found Pravinaben baking bread. She had already prepared meals for over 25 persons. Everything in the kitchen was disorderly. The spectacle made Sumatiben laugh slyly. Pravinaben didn't take notice of either *Sethji* or Sumatiben. Hers was long drawn face with dishevelled hair and uncovered head.

At what appeared to them as an

opportune moment, they tied the talisman around the neck of Pravinaben. Pravinaben unmindfully served hot food in ten plates and bawled out with her head and hands raised to the roof, "come ye all to partake this food and to be appeased." Then, she served for herself all the remaining food and began eating. She had in her plate a heap of 40 loaves of bread, a good quantity of rice, dahl and vegetable curry.

Sumatiben prevailed upon the bewildred *Sethji* to eat something. As he was hungry right from that morning, he also sat down to eat. *Sethji* asked Sumatiben also to join, but she declined. Sethji ate that day with his head hung down, wondering what will happen to his wife if perchance she who, ordinarily ate too little, consumed the lot before her that afternoon. Little later, he glanced towards Pravinaben; it confounded him to find the plate which contained a big heap of breads, empty. He gaped in mental confusion. Poor man; he didn't know that Pravinaben had thrust all the food inside her blouse.

Meals over, Pravinaben went into the bath-room and locked herself. There she opened the tap with full force and confined to the gutter all the food which she had stored in her blouse. The oil-stained old blouse also met the same fate. Then, she began mock bathing by pouring pots after pots of water on the floor interspersed with motions of scrubbing the arms and the body. The water splashes and the jingling noise of the bangles on her hand gave the notion of her bathing to those who were outside. She remained locked that way for over an hour and Sumatiben who knew what was happening within, said to *Sethji,* " Pravina has been bathing seated under the open tap for over an hour. She should be got out; she might catch cold and bronchial fever. " That very hearing made *Sethji's* heart to double its pulsation and his blood to chill. Like all well-to-do people, he was also devoid of forbearance; he sank in forebodings, knowing not how long he would still have to pass through the turmoil. Sumatiben severely banged the bathroom, commanding Pravinaben to step out. Some ten minutes later, Pravinaben walked out of the bathroom fully drenched.

Because she was not normally used to that much of physical labour and strain. Pravinaben developed a slight temperature. Sumatiben took her to the dressing room and from the closet containing Pravinaben's clothes, she gave her few pieces to change and laid her on the bed. Without the knowledge of *Sethji,* Sumatiben gave her friend some powerful tablets also to counteract the fever and that's where the matter rested.

By evening that day, news had spread in the neighbourhood that Pravinaben had turned mad. Some said she was possessed, Good many people called in to express their formal grief over what had happened. Little after sun-set came Shri Bhudhisagar. The evening waned into darkness and the night passed off without events worthy of notice or report,

Next morning, Pravinaben got up and prepared 50 cups of coffee and added salt to it. None could say or do anything. She broke about a dozen cups, saucers and some expensive dishes, all brought by her uncle from Switzerland. Because she was posing as a possessed person, she had to be doing one odd thing or the other and hence she went about causing little breakage here and some wastage there and tearing and cutting clothes. She also gave freedom to the two turtle-doves by releasing them from the silver cage.

At about 10 a. m. or so, a man who claimed to be from *Mewar* came there and introduced himself as a *brahmin* and said that he had heard from some associates of

Shri Raghunath Maharaj about the condition of Seth's wife. He said that he was an exorcist and that he should be given an opportunity to examine the case.

Pravinaben was brought before him. He ordered for little water from a well. In the present era of taps and tanks, there aren't many wells in the central parts of the cities, but *vaishnav* temples maintain wells and use well water only for *Poojas* and cooking purposes. So, Shri Bhudisagar was sent to a local temple with a new earthen pot to fetch well water, but instead of returning right away, Shri Bhudisagar wasted sometime trying to answer an old riddle put to him by the learned priest there. Here is it :—

What's that which all love more than life ?
Fear more than death or mortal strife ?
That which contented men desire,
The poor possess, the rich require ?
The miser spends, the spendthrift saves,
And all men carry to their graves ?

Shri Bhudhisagar who had burst the baloons of good many persons' wisdom with the pin of his deep knowledge couldn't just say 'nothing' and walk away. Intelligent people very often fail in small tests.

When Shri Bhudhisagar brought the water, the *Mewari brahmin* poured a little of it in the cavity of his right palm, chanted something and splashed it on Pravinaben's face. She began to sway. Later, in an authoritative tone, the exorcist questioned, " Who are you?" "I am Vimala Devi from *Garhwal*," said Pravinaben. To the next query, " Why have you come and what do you want ? Her reply was, " I had come to a nearby town to square out past disputes with a matron there and wandered into this body. Now I find that I can't get out unless I have a dip in the river *bhagirathi* at *Uttarkashi.*" "Do you promise never more to come again if you are left in *Uttarkashi* ? " " Yes provided I am not talked about," said Pravinaben. " Because it will take somedays before you happen to reach the place you have named, do you promise to remain quiet, till then ? " Pravinaben the heroine in the deceitful drama, slowly said, " yes, provided I am promised to be taken and left there in the *Himalayas* within a week. "

The male accomplice in the conspiracy of ' possession & spirits ' rose and asked *Sethji* to take his wife to *Uttarkashi* where, after a bath in the river *Bhagirathi* he said, Pravinaben would become normal. *Sethji* was made to take an oath not to talk to his wife or others about the episode after his wife was relieved from the hold of Vimala Devi – the sprit. Lastly, he demanded Rs. 250/– as his professional fee. *Sethji* asked the man to meet him after a fortnight to receive his payment.

Sumatiben nudged her friend with her elbow in a concealed manner. Pravinaben knew what that covert nudge was designed to convey. That very day two berths were booked by *Dehradun Express* for the next day. Shri and Shrimati Bhudhisagar gave a hearty send off to Shri and Shrimati Kasturbhai T. Shah, wishing them a most pleasant plus profitable pilgrimage. Pravinaben's state of mind as the train whistled off in motion, beloved readers, I leave it to you to imagine.

They alighted in *Delhi* from where their friends motored them to *Rishikesh*. The onward journey from *Rishikesh* was negotiated by a private taxi and they reached their destination the next day.

The couple bathed in the holy river *Bhagirathi* and Pravinaben cautiously switched over to normalcy. *Sethji* felt light and thanked Gods. Beaming with natural joy, they visited the temple of *Vimaleshwar Mahadev* where Pravinaben performed *poojas* to her heart's content.

Once in the *Himalayas*, *Sethji* couldn't control the captivating temptation to prolong his stay there. They camped there for some days and thereafter visited other important places like *Badrinath* and *Kedarnath*. On their return journey, they went to *Kurukshetra*, *Mathura*, *Brindavan*, *Gokul*, *Ujjain* and rounded off the tour by going to *Ranchodraiji's* temple at *Dakor* in *Gujarat*. The noble pair felt themselves blessed and sanctified.

When I had occasion to be their guest, as I annually do, they surprised me with the news of their delightsome pilgrimage to many important places in the northern part of the country. I simply couldn't believe it; the impossible appeared to have happened.

On that very afternoon when Sumatiben came to meet me, in her presence, Pravinaben appraised me with the dramatic details of the ruse they played upon *Sethji*, calculated to impel him to take her on a pilgrimage and that it had worked successfully. Pravinaben also informed me about her having undergone sufficient self-mortification for the hurtsome trickery she employed against her husband. Sumatiben, the master brain in the game, didn't have to atone, because to her legal mind, the ends justified the means.

Were that wise man who said, 'FRAILTY, THY NAME IS WOMAN,' alive to-day, from the quantum of feminine accomplishments of the present generation, their untapped talents and their neck to neck race with men to capture power plus progress, he would have apologetically said :—

In virtues and piety, men can't women beat,
They alone run homes and keep them neat.
If given opportunities, women can dignify any seat,
If necessity arises, she too can successfully cheat.

DEVOTEE DESPISED :

Polytheism is as old as the *Vedas* but the system of cults and sub-religious sects came into vogue within the only range of about two thousand years ago. The original idea behind the formation of cults and sects was to bring about in the followers one pointed and concentrated devotion to a particular sect and deity and to make it easy for them to earn gradual spiritual progress thereby. Unfortunately, this arrangement only fostered hatred amongst the followers for other systems and the divisions in the forms of cults have come to stay in the divided state as they all are at present.

Different teachers have preached differently and have differently interpreted the scriptures, either according to the needs of the time or according to the wishes of the followers or according to their convenience. The result is that today we have followers of different cults who do not see eye to eye with each other, atleast as far as their religious convictions are concerned.

There are many ways leading to God.

Contemplation of the self, *Raja-yoga,* and devotion and selfless service are the principle ones. All the paths are efficacious, depending upon the suitability to one's mental and intellectual constitution.

Those who think and preach that their sect alone is superior to those of others, they know nothing about God and religion. They are, what we may call, the commercial minded fanatics whose only interest is to increase the strength of their followers, keep flying the flag of their popularity aloft and have their monetary income secure. To say that God is attainable only by following the teachings of a particular religion would amount to the illogical statement that only the first class passengers of a train would reach the destination to which the train is bound.

It would be advantageous to us to reflect upon the following lines and be guided by them on religion :—

RELIGION simply means, " code of pure and pious life. "
Every religion preaches this; yet, all revel in strife.
Love for others must precede devotion to the unseen,
In this lies true religiousness, so say seers umpteen.
God is one, we needn't discard this factual view,
If all realised this truth, peace will everywhere ensue,
Obvious teachings we reject, over the abstract we fight,
Nothing can be more deplorable than drifting from light.

The contention contained in the above poem pointedly portrays what do the religions stand for, and what do they teach to mankind. Hatred in any form is bad; but when people who claim to be lovers of God freely practice it on religious differences, it is most dispicable and the sooner we cultivate sensible tolerance towards the followers of other systems, the better for us all.

Generally, the wife follows the faith of her husband. A maiden from the *Vaishnav* family, after wedding a *Jain*, follows *Jainism*. Even Christian ladies, when they accept *Hindus* as marriage partners, they undergo a formal conversion rites and become *Hindus* and worship the *Hindu* way. All the same, we do come across stray cases of husbands and wives owing allegience to different religious teachings. but very seldom do we find such couples living in absolute peace and harmony with one another.

Here is a true account of a lady devotee who was persecuted by her dogmatic husband and parents-in-law for her religious beliefs.

Sugunaben aged twenty years was living with her parents in a town in *Gujarat*. Like her pious parents, she was also a good devotee of *Lord Krishna*. Because they all were seriously intent upon making spiritual progress in the current life itself and because they felt that the present day *Vaishnav* preceptors are much more worldly than all the worldly people, the three got themselves initiated into the traditional *Viashnavite* rituals of '*Krishna*' worship by a celibate well-known as an evolved soul.

Sugunaben completed her education after passing the final B. A. examination and her parents were in search of a suitable bridegroom for her in the Patel community to which they belonged.

It is only in the community of Patels that the daughters remain a recurring burden on the parental side of the family right till death. As such, Patels generally live and labour for their daughters, neices, and sisters right till they are called back from the earth. Even for little things like hair oil and sweet-meats etc., the girls depend upon their parents or brothers even after their marriage.

In the *Hindu* community marriage is generally a matter of convenience. The husbands least respect the sanctity of marriage bonds—more particularly so, the *Patels*. These greedy and selfish husbands send their wives to their parental places whenever they want something from the in-laws. Because of this burdensome situation, birth of a girl in the community where fat dowries rule marriage alliance, is considered as inauspicious. A peep into the *Vedas* reveal that nowhere therein is there a prayer by anyone for begetting a daughter.

Sugunaben's parents managed to get her betrothed to one Chandrakant. He was also a full-fledged graduate and came from a well-to-do family of building contractors. Everything was good about the family excepting that they were *Jains*. Even amongst the *Patels*, we come across families embracing and following *Jainism*. But somehow, Sugunaben and her parents felt that her religious independence would not be infringed upon by her husband or by the in-laws.

Chandrakant and his parents also liked the girl because Sugunaben was quite accomplished and of good qualities; further she was to bring twenty-five thousand rupees as cash dowry, and in addition luxurious paraphernalia worth several thousands. Because Sugunaben's parents and relatives were well-to-do and well-known, other auxiliary benefits were also expected to be in the offing. Naturally therefore all of them were immensely pleased about the rich alliance.

On a convenient date, Sugunaben was married with the pomp which her parent's opulent means permitted. Because of my friendly connection with the family, I also attended the marriage function along with their venerable *guru*.

At the time of shifting to her husband's house, Sugunaben took with her the special cabinet box which contained the sacred articles of worship and an idol of *Lord Krishna* which was installed therein. In the initial stages, aspirants resort to idol-worship to establish contact with that supreme principle which does not come under the grip of mind, sense organs or the intellect. An idol, we must however know, is only a symbol of God, just as a tricolour flag is a symbol of the Indian nation. Every religion all over the world has introduced idol worship in one form or the other. Due to nescience and imperfection, the embodied souls cannot apprehend the true attributes of the formless God; that's why, for the convenience of bringing about mental stillness and onward spiritual progress, man through his imagination created mental pictures of the invisible God which resulted in idol worship. Truly speaking, idol worship does not divinize the idol, but it exalts the worshipping soul. To revere any object by relating it to God is idol worship. Idol worship is a proof of our faith and a media to keep awakened in us the godly feelings.

A few months passed without incidents and everyone at her in-laws' place treated Sugunaben with love and care. Thereafter, began the harassment. "Everything about Sugunaben is good enough, the only flaw is, she is worshipping *Krishna* who according to we *Jains* is still rotting in the hell," said Jagtap, Chandrakant's preceptor, a *Jain* householder who is versed with the exhoteric revelations of the *Jain* scriptures and talks of *atma* and is even credited to seeing *atma* in the *beedis* also – without which he cannot do anything. Sugunaben's husband only reqested his preceptor to wean her out from '*Krishna bhakti*.

So, whenever, Jagtap spoke to Sugunaben, there were always pinchig hints that '*Vaishnavism*' is no real path to salvation and the like. But because her confidence and faith in devotion to *Krishna* had taken firm roots in her and because also Jagtap happened to be her husband's reverend *guru*, she did not argue with him.

Sugunaben had sometimes to visit the house of her husband's *guru*. The general atmosphere of the house and his changed conduct in his house. made her feel differently about Jagtap. Like good many persons who claim to be religious or appear to be so, and yet lack in virtuous living, to that low category, Sugunaben rightly felt, Jagtap belonged. She wasn't surprised, for she knew that in the presnt times of false values; appearances and tongue alone matter. She only pitied him and his learning.

Sugunaben also knew that devotion of the tongue or appearance never fructifies. What is needed is sincere love for God, one-pointedly pursued. Said otherwise, merely talking about God and religion does not make one holy or bring about God realisation in the same way as sheer speaking about food does not appease one's hunger. Only those devotees who with the strength of full faith forge ahead in devotion can become divine and one with God.

When Jagtap persisted in his nagging, She told him point-blank " dear Sir, I have had enough of your sermons. You needn't trouble me by your hurtful statements about the religion to which I am soul-fully wedded. The great *Lord Mahavir's* philosophy isn't strange to my knowledge. I know him to have exhorted his votaries to search and respect the truths which unite all religions instead of digging for the differencess of faith. Restudy your scriptures and remember.

Scriptural studies to understanding should lead,
True understanding should wholesome knowledge feed.
Sound knowledge should God's love infuse,
And through it, transforming bliss diffuse.

Jagtap was infuriated. He didn't expect to be silenced by his disciple's spouse. He complained to Chandrakant, "you have erred in accepting Suguna as a wife. She has begun to sermonise and treat me with contempt. Chandrakant called his wife and sharply rebuked her for her misbehaviour with his revered preceptor.

Thenceonwards, practically everyone at home began to tease and insult her. They never allowed her to pray peacefully. They hid the articles of her worship and scorned her on slight pretexts over neglecting the household duties. Even the little children were instructed not to talk to her. Her husband treated her as a toy, her mother-in-law treated her as a cook and the other members of the house treated her as a maid-servant. Her only fault was that she was a devotee of *Lord Krishna* and was not prepared to compromise her faith for anything else.

Sugunaben suffered the ill-treatment without complaining. She treated it as a test from God and she prayed to Him, the supreme source of strength, to fortify her with requisite mental strength to pass through it. Because they were not devotees, her people in the house didn't know at all that however much the true devotees may outwardly seem to be suffering, internally they are at peace and that they know how to keep sufferings at bay.

With a view to making her forget and give up the *Vaishnavite* ways, as per her father-in-law's instructions, she was kept engaged in attending to the various chorus of household duties from morn to night. This didn't affect Sugunaben's devotion, because she knew that to a true devotee work is not divorced to devotion. Like the ladies who carry many pails of water and yet unceasingly remain conscious of their head-loads even while talking with their friends and walking back home, so also a true devotee remains steeped in God consciousness even while he is attending to diverse works. She was doing all the work at home while mentally chanting her Lord's name.

Regular incantations mentally done, not only sustain one's inner purity but they also strengthen one's soul and ward-off the entry of evil and sinful thoughts. Light dispels the outer darkness, so also chanting of *japa* does expel the darkness of the inner mind.

In order to train herself in the constancy of remembrance of *Lord Krishna*, Sugunaben wore on her person an attractive golden locket studded with original diamonds – a precious gift from her brother in America.

Troubles didn't abate and Sugunaben also continued facing them with subdued feelings. Her forbearance fitted in with the followtng definition of 'endurance' by the great *Shankaracharya* :—

Forbearance of all troubles withot resistance & tension,
This state, the sages as 'endurance' verily mention.

Her parents – in – law clamped more restrictions on her. She was not allowed to go out to visit the temple for the regular worship. She wasn't free to talk to any visitor. She wasn't allowed the use of cars and her matrilineal and patrilineal relatives and other associates were usually received with coldness. Because none liked her in the house, everyone found fault in everything she did and the young and the elders scolded and vexed her. Because she remained impervious to the ill – treatment meted out to her, her husband and others began to harass and mock Sugunaben all the more. She faced them as one does the higher tests which call for greater strength.

People usually invite major troubles by their thoughtless actions performed in moments of damaging haughtiness which clouds one's wisdom. True to this trapping tendency, without the slightest reflection as to what would be the consequences, one day at the behest of Chandrakant, his mother went to the room where Sugunaben was praying and from there she lifted the cabinet containing Sugunaben's *pooja* articles and the idol of *Lord Krishna* and threw it on the road below the balcony of their first floor flat.

Sugunaben who had so far tolerated all sorts of harassments, couldn't bear to see those objects which she held most sacred. thrown away by her mother-in-law as one throws away dirt and rubbish. She couldn t contain or control her hurt feelings. In that state of wounded emotions, she threw herself from the first floor to reach the place where the holy idol of *Lord Krishna* and other articles of *pooja* lay scattered. She was badly injured all over and became unconscious. Because the locality happened to be a busy centre, people thronged to see the tragedy.

An ambulance was summoned and Sugunaben was removed to the hospital and the mob there who came to know of the inner details of the happening pelted stones into the house of Chandrakant. For fear of being belaboured by the angry neighbours and by the members of the public, Chandrakant and his household people couldn't stir out of the place for a few days.

It took well over two months for Sugunaben to recover from the fatal effects of the fall. From the day of her discharge from the hospital, she went to stay with her parents with the damaged limbs.

Because Sugunaben and her parents thought it dangerous for her to go back to her husband's house, on the sane advice of their wise preceptor, Sugunaben applied for a judicial separation on the plea that there were reasonable grounds for her to fear that her living with Chandrakant would endanger her life because of cruel persecution from the defendent and her in – laws.

For fear of public fury, Chandrakant the defendent did not contest his wife's plaint. The court granted her petition. After three years, Sugunaben secured the divorce. Public pressure prevailed and Chandrakant had to reluctantly return to Sugunaben the amount of dowry and other things which he received in his marriage with her. These days, Sugunaben is with her pious parents pursuing her spiritual practices with an added alacrity and aspiration.

Chandrakant today is a disgraced person disowned by the society; he has also severed his connections with Jagtap – the religious imposter whose poisonous sermons landed Chandrakant and all the members of the family in hot waters of social stigma. Because wise parents boycot boys in whose house females are ill – treated or where feminine suicide has taken place, Chandrakant hasn't been able to remarry since the judicial annulment of his marriage.

If there is any field where unending quarrels over the trifle take place, it is 'RELIGION!'

The honourable Shri Morarji Desai, Deputy Prime Minister, who attended the 18th annual conference of '*Anuvrata*' on 16–10–1967 at Ahmedabad, despite many of his friends having insensibly requested him not to do so, sharply criticised the existing differences between the *Jains* who on the one hand believed in *Lord Mahavira* and who on the other hand quarrelled with one another by twisting the truths taught by their glorious master.

Continuing further, Shri Desai said, "I am not a follower of Acharya Tulsi or Sant-Balji, and I don't also agree with all their teachings but yet, I find nothing wrong in going to know what they have to say. I respect these two saints also who are doing fine work to bring about spiritual renaissance in the society. I consider it my duty to co-operate with their laudable mission."

Pettinesses plus prejudices in matters and men connected with religion isn't augustly and if everyone marshalled enough moral courage and understanding like Shri Desai and denounced everything and everyone encroaching upon healthy changes in religious beliefs, the world would be much safer and peaceful place to live in for the while we all have to.

To bring about the above blissful state, all the heads of the various religious cults and sects should first sincerely preach through thoughts, words and deeds, 'RESPECT AND LOVE' for one another and particularly see to it that their disciples and devotees practice it unflinchingly and blossom in the following qualities which go to make "TRUE DEVOTEES."

TRUE DEVOTEES are they who are habitually meek,
Regenerated they ever remain–Godhead alone they seek.
Unassuming work is worship–this they well believe,
Essentials alone matter to them–shadows they leave.

Delectable in countenance–one and all they cheer,
Easy praise they avoid–they are above all fear.
Virtuous to the core, they treat all well,
Oneness they practice–in differences they don't revel.
Temperance is their weapon–sensuousuess they slay,
Elegantly they meet problems–they truly love fair-play.
Exemplary in every way–they guide the weak,
Sincerely they work their way to divinity's peak.

PICKER PITIES :

1

These days, the alliterated term 'pick-pockets' is almost an house-hold name. In all public places, such as railway stations, bus stands, cinema houses, popular temples, mass meetings, shopping and pilgrimage centres, placards announcing "BEWARE OF PICK-POCKETS" are prominently displayed.

The pick-pockets are an organized institution, operating province wise, and each group of them is allotted a particular area and hours to work in different parts of the provinces. They can't work in the jurisdiction of other groups without their prior consent or without paying the monetary compensation for the lease. There are efficient instructors to train the new entrants in the art of using their fingers and razor blades to transfer others' purses to one's own pocket. When arrested by the police, they have people to get them out on bail.

Wherever and whenever people gather in crowds, the pick-pockets move in there and operate. Like Lord, God, poverty plus pick-pockets are also all-pervading in *India.* In the criminal world, pick-pockets predominate. Akin to the conjurer's hands, pick-pockets' hands are also quicker than our eyes. Within seconds they empty the pockets of their victims and disappear. The index and the middle fingers go into one's pocket like a pair of tongs and the contents are slickly picked. A little piece of a sharp blade, concealed inside the outgrown thumb-nail of the right hand, does the incision on the pockets and instantly all things which they hold, pour or fall into the ready hands of the perfect pick-pockets.

The pick-pockets capitalise and earn a rich living on peoples' carelessness. Sometimes, they even outsmart our excessive carefulness. They watch and observe people. They come to know from your ways and airs that you have money and where it is kept.

Of late, educated youngmen and women also have entered into this field of emptying plain peoples' pockets.

When you find a person closing in on you or bumping into you in a train or bus, you may be sure that an attempt is being made to pick your pocket. Persons who dress gaudily and with handkerchiefs tied around their necks or wrists and those whose eyes are moving and weighing people, may be taken to be living in life's lowest levels and may be pick-pockets.

By way of precaution against the pick-pockets, we must never display our purses, count money in the open or talk in public about the amounts we may be carrying. We must also see that we don't give ourselves away by frequently feeling our pockets which contain money. While travelling, only amounts that we need for the journey should be carried on our person – the remaining should he kept away in our heavy baggage. Instead of notes, coins of different denominations can be advantageously used. Big amounts may also be safe if kept inside the abdomenal pocket of the vest. If inspite of all these precautions, you still loose your money to a pick-pocket, then you need blame your luck only.

Whenever a pick-pocket is apprehended and the public go at him with their lefts and rights, should a well-dressed person come forward to plead for him and should he prevent you from handing him over to the police by saying, "well chums! we have done enough of thrashing; the bloke will remember it till his last breath; now let's let him loose," you may take it for granted that such a person is none but one of his aides. In such situations, sometimes wayside policemen intervene and say "we have known this fellow as a hotel boy here; he has lost his job and perhaps hunger has forced him to try a hand at your pocket," and just slap the guy and chase him away; you may be then certain that the law is working hand in glove with the gang.

Herein narrated is a case of an educated pick-pocket who returned the amount picked by him and thereby proved that all criminals are not hard hearted, and that they are also susceptible to human feelings.

I was once going to *Bombay* from *Miraj*. At *Poona* station, many passengers from my compartment got down and a well dressed young man with a bag in his hands boarded the train along with some others. Among them was also an old lady, past her fifty years. While others sat elsewhere, the old lady sat on the seat facing mine and the young man placed some reading materials next to me and sat beside them.

Like some diseases which are hard of detection and diagnosis, similarly some persons' facial blends are such that they too defy physiognomical analysis. This young man whom we shall hereafter refer to as Shri Shahu, was also one of this type. His general characteristics were difficult of adjudgement from his features,

The train started moving and Shri Shahu brought out his expensive cigarette case and passed, it round offering it to the passengers who were in our enclosure of the compartment. Then, he lit one himself and began drawing the nicotian smoke in measured puffs and blew out smoke rings. With five others also smoking, our enclosure was covered by a thin smoke screen. Little later, he took out a large packet of cashew-nuts and gave a handful of them to everybody.

Among others, the love-starved people, that is, individuals who haven't enjoyed parental, fraternal or domestic love, also behave generously, going about distributing things and exhibiting charitable disposition. I felt that Shri Shahu must have belonged to that category of persons who didn't taste love when young,

Thereafter, Shri Shahu began talking with few passengers and in the course of his talks he delved into palmistry, the branch of learning in which not many can be said to be proficient, of which many persons know only a little and about which almost all glibly talk. He opened with the air of a person who was well versed in that inferential science but ended as a pedant. One by one, passengers held out their palms for being read. Shri Shahu began firing out select readings to different persons. Here are some of his blundering slips :—To one, whose headline was islanded and threaded, he said, " you must take sufficient care or else you will suffer sudden spasms. Anyway, your health will improve after six months. " To another person whose headline wasn't firmly marked, he said, " you are rational in your approach and you will live a wholesome life, enjoying a good measure of prospects and longevity. " In a suggestive way, he said to the third man, " because of the breaks on your heart-line, around the age of forty-two you are likely to come across danger. You are advised to keep away from ponds, lakes, rivers and seas. " To the old lady who waited her turn, he said, " of your three sons, only one of them is good to you. " That random guess somehow worked as a fluke and the old lady nodded her head in agreement.

At *Kalyan* station, Shri Shahu ordered tea and snacks and partook of them with three other passengers. That over, he busied himself reading a copy of Sexton Blake's detective series.

The train halted at *Dadar* where all the passengers in our enclosure, excepting Shri Shahu, myself and the old lady got down. Few other passengers boarded our compartment at *Dadar* and taking their seats they flooded the compartment with some cheap musical hits from a film.

As the Express train steamed into Victoria Terminus, people were getting ready to alight. Shri Shahu was the first to get down and speed away.

It was then that the old lady, somewhat shaken and shocked, complained that her money-bag containing Rs. 150/-, two gold rings and an important document was stolen away. She also announced that she suspected Shri Shahu has removed it from her waist where it was hanging carefully tucked to the edges of her saree.

I tried to take side and told her that Shri Shahu couldn't have taken it. Saying that it was he who had gone close to her while reading her hand, she maintained that Shahu must have pulled away the bag in one quick stroke and slipped it into his pocket. Then, sobbingly she said, she had to raise that amount to pay the rent and boarding charges of her son who was recently employed in the city. The two rings were also to be sold for cash money which she would be needing for her personal use, she added concludingly.

I could still see Shri Shahu near the yonder exit gate waiting to pass out. But what could be done ? To subject a respectable person to a search in public, purely on circumstantial suspicion, would amount to invading upon his self-respect. I told the old lady that a person of shri Shahu's bearing could'nt be a pick-pocket and walked out of the train leaving her non-plussed.

Even as I was going out, I was trying to place Shri Shahu as the culprit, but however I tried to reason, it only pointed to an impossibility. The professional pick-pockets, particularly because they have to operate unnoticed, would naturally want to remain unknown and would never expose themselves to recognition as Shri Shahu had done, by sticking them repasts, offering cigarettes and reading their hands.

As I reached the taxi stand, near about there I saw Shri Shahu talking to an ill-clad individual of thick lips and clubbed thumbs. The seriousness with which they both were chit-chatting was suggestive of their knowing each other well. I didn't know why Shri

Shahu, if he was really a respectable person, as I thought him to be, would be chummy witn one who can be dignified only as a first class scoundrel. It was all misleading and I knew not what to make out. "Could that well-dressed and fairly educated and handsome young-man be an active member of a gang of pick-pockets?" – the question had occupied my head and was ragging me.

After he had finished with that tramp, Shri Shahu left the station premises and moved in the direction of the General Post Office. I don't know why, I also went after him. Near the corner bend leading to the G. P. O., I accosted him and informed him about that old lady having lost her bag containing her money which she had raised by selling her house-hold articles and that she was weeping in a quandary. I did not tell him about her suspecting him.

"I thought she was rich," retorted he. That hearing made me change my earlier opinion about him. Adding more to what I had already told him, I said, "you see friend, these are very hard days and somehow, the poor lady's son, I am told, managed to get employed here in Bombay and without the money she has now lost, she fears that her son might have lo give up the job, and that both of them will have to suffer unbearable hardships. As it is, she is now wailing at the platform. I am also told that her ticket was also in that bag."

Shri Shahu thought for a moment and said to me, "wait, I will just come," and he went into the *Irani* restaurant at the other end of the road. He returned instantly and handing me a small frilled cloth bag, the type which the ladies in *Maharashtra* and south *India* use to keep money, said, "you may take this and give it to the lady." If she doesn't happen to be there, then what am I to do with this bag? countered I and insisted that he too should accompany me.

Without reluctance he came. An intelligent man as he was, he seemed to know that it was no trap to get him arrested, or perhaps he put on the confidence of a person who can resourcefully front the eventualities. As we neared the platform and saw the old lady, Shri Shahu thrust the bag in my hand and made himself scarce.

I went to that old lady who was seated on her steel trunk. She was crying with hung head and her heavy hands held her temples. I shook her and held before her the lost bag. She grabbed it like a playful child snatching a toy.

She had no words – her eyes welled in joy as she opened the bag and satisfied herself that the contents were intact.

Before she could question me, I silenced her by telling, "listen mother, by the grace of God, you have got back your money. Now forget about how it has come back to you. With care you now go where you have to." We left the station and she hired a *tonga* and went off beaming with gratitude.

At times, even the heartless criminals prove to be humane in their feelings and surprise us who are used to believing that the virtuous and the pious alone are kind and compassionate.

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MISCREANTS' MISADVENTURE :

All the several happenings which we encounter in our day to day life have cogent causes behind them. They are our own *karmas* past or present actions of our unfettered will.

We are not to wait till next birth for the effects of all our present actions. There are some categories of them which earn for us instant fruits here and now; just as it happens when one touches the fire – the result is instantaneous burns.

It is this particular arrangement in the subtle law of *karma* which induces us to perform good actions in the present, and at the same time deters us from doing lots of bad *karmas*. If we were to receive the effects of our present *karmas* in the next birth alone, there would be lack of impetus to work; people would naturally choose not to labour in the present. What would be the fun of working for things which will come to us in the next birth! – knowledge about which is shut to human intellect in the same way as the details of our past live's aren't discernible to us.

The fool-proof system of the law of retribution operates in an orderly manner and none are denied nor one can escape the effects of one's fair or foul actions; howsoever one may wish against them. The effects of certain *karmas* come to one immediately as a reflex sequence in the same manner as a bullet released from the chamber of a gun reacts. If one were to suffer for his present foul deeds in the unknown and unknowable future (unknowable to vast majority of us), then the evil-minded would go on committing bad deeds without fear. The person who doesn't want to pay or he who thinks he can escape payment, he would incur more and more debts without the slightest worry and hence there would be a chaos.

Here's a case of a young man and his spouse who suffered severely since they wantonly wronged a promising young lady to fulfil their selfish motive.

I once happened to be a guest of an official of a mill of repute in *Gujarat.* I was to remain with him for three days. My host had invited good many persons to come to his place to meet me. Amongst the invitees were some persons who knew me, some who had met me, others who having heard of me wanted *to meet me and there were also quite a few who having heard of me and having privately talked to me more than once, no more wanted* to come to me.

On my return from my usual evening walks, one day, I found a friend of my host waiting for me. He asked me if he could bring along his daughter to meet me. I said, like others, she might also come. It was after he had left me that I felt the oddness of the question. He knew that I was open to meet all and, as such, there wasn't the necessity for any clarification. On reflection, I felt that perhaps she was suffering from some incurable diseases or might be that he wanted to consult me about her horoscope. Opinions current in the Country, rate the monks as adept apothecaries and ace astrologers. Of course, some of them indeed are.

After dinner, when I was in the meeting hall with other visitors, that gentleman came with his daughter. He asked her to bow to me. " No, the sensible don't pay respects to the sluggish souls and add to their imagined importance," retorted she. She wasn't mentally sound, atleast so she seemed, speaking the way she did with dramatic airs. When she was asked to take her seat on a vacant chair, " no the strong, stand and stare. Those who stand they perspire and inspire but those who sit they just misfire," she quipped. However, little later, all of her own she silently seated herself on the floor near the chair.

She didn't sit there long; all at once with the startling swiftness of a whipped horse she rose, marched backwards and when she was full four feet far from me, she stopped and started speaking in French. Even with a smattering knowledge of that sweet language, few of us knew from the modulation of the voice, the intonations and the pronunciations, that she was really speaking fluent and flowery French. Her serious style of speech suggested that she was submitting her arguments before the judge and the jurors. All of us listened in compelled silence and without fully under-standing all that which she so spiritedly said. At the end of what appeared to us to be a speech of about 20 minutes, by which time some 4000 words must have flowed fastly from her mouth, she bowed in that typical manner as the cunning counsels in criminal courts do and then fell down unconscious.

The way she fell with a thud on the wooden flooring, momentarily moved many men from their seats. Her father Dr. Balkrishna asked us all to take it easy and calmly assured us that she would regain consciousness ere long.

Divyaben, for that was her name, opened her eyes and sat up like a person waking up from a sound sleep and looked around her surroundings. Then, she questioned her father, "Papa dear! When did we come here? Why are these persons gazing at me silently? Why isn't Ramaben (hostess) speaking? Who is this *Swamiji*?" Her father didn't reply to any of the questions which she had put in such quick succession. Signalling her father to rise, she got up and holding on to his hand, she moved out of the bungalow.

Next morning, I received the following interesting and informative details of the Doctor's daughter, Divyaben; which explained satisfactorily her present pitiable plight.

Dr. Balkrishna had two daughters, Vimalaben and Divyben. Vimala was senior to Divya by two years. Because Vimala's uncle who stayed in Chandarnagar, a former French settelment, had no childern, Vimalaben was allowed to stay with him.

Since Vimalaben was born to her parents when they were between 30 and 35 years of age, the age of medial mental maturity, and also because they were better circumstanced and were not under the care and interference of Vimalaben's grand parents, she was born intelligent.

She grew well like a well-watered and sun-bathed plant coming up from within a fertile land. Her desire for an improved general knowledge was so intense that right from her tender age, from different sources, she sought songs, stories and sonnets and through them sharpened her intelligence. She enjoyed a good education under the loving care of her affectionate uncle, aunt and foreign teachers. She graduated with honours in French.

As for Divya, due to depressing domestic circumstances and the dull life which her parents had perforce to lead when Divyaben was in the womb, she was born and grew up as a dull girl. The general mental state of a mother during pregnancy influences the growth of the foetus, even in that formative period, is a common knowledge and yet steps aren't taken to profit from it.

With best of efforts, Divyaben couldn't even get through her matriculation – so back-ward was she in her classes; and irritable, fretful and grave at home. She couldn't make lasting friendship with any of her class or school mates.

With a fine educational background and having been brought up in an atmosphere of love and freedom, Vimalaben went to *Bombay* and took up secretarial service in a firm of solicitors and also attended to part time translation work in French in one of the Consulates there. It seemed proper to her that educated women must also work, besides marrying and bringing up a family.

Though she was just a career girl, earning three to four hundred rupees per month, yet, because of her other attractive accomplishments in the field of music and dancing, she gained an easy access into good circles. The call of her age brought her also in touch with good many young men who were accustomed to bask in the sunshine of feminine notice and company. However, for one reason or the other, she couldn't accept any one of them as fit person for association or for selection as a life partner.

Her parents were themselves on the look out for a suitable match for Vimalaben. They were too open and liberal in their views. They only wanted to see their daughter happily married. They weren't the tradition–tied types who are particular about the nonsensical caste considerations. But, a modern educated girl of democratic times as she was, she rejected each and every choice made by them. She felt and told her parents conveyingly that in a personal matter such as marriage, she should be given a free hand and be left to herself.

After a pretty long time, she opted to marry a boy who had advertised in the matrimonial columns of the news papers. Vimalaben didn't know that it is only when there is something catchy about themselves that males take to advertising themselves as prospective bridegrooms. In the *Hindu* society, where boys generally marry in their own community, in all of which feminine members predominate, there is really no need for an eligible bachelor to seek marriage alliance through the columns of the press.

Anyway, she negotiated with one Dilipkumar. She was enamoured by his ornamental usage of rich verbiage in his writings. They met for a little time frequently and Vimalaben thought that she knew her man well. The boy glibly told Vimalaben that they can't live on air, aqua and affection alone. He said that they would require regular resources capable of assuring them roof, raiment and ration. For that, he said that he had in mind a plan to run a stationery mart for which atleast Rs. 5000/- would be needed to start on a modest scale and another Rs. 2500/- to pay off debts. Then he astutely told his prospective spouse that he didn't think it proper to wed before he was suitably employed or was doing something to earn a decent livelihood and also freed himself from the burden of debts. Vimalaben offered to meet his monetary needs. There she was, head-long, to marry a third class graduate who was worriedly scanning and anxiously answering all advertisements for a vacant clerical post. Her parents saw the boy. They weren't impressed. They found him good in appearance only. His general manners and tastes weren't such as would elicit anyone's praise. They first saw him attired in multi-coloured bush-shirt, the type which the rising actors of condemnable repute alone choose to wear. From his subsequent visits, they deduced that he was a good for nothing extravagant boy with a mad taste for an expensive way of living. But, beeause they knew that Vimalaben had made up her mind, they didn't want to displease her. They also hoped that Dilipkumar would be won over to change his ways by Vimala after their marriage. There are cases of people having improved after marriage.

On a suitable date, Vimalaben was formally betrothed to Dilipkumar. Before that, Vimalaben gave her future partner the sum of Rs..6500/- in cash, as agreed earlier, without the knowledge of her parents.

A week after Vimalaben's betrothel, her uncle took Divyaben on a visit to Chandarnagar, Divyaben remained there for about a month and on her way back, yielding to Vimalaben's repeated requests, renewed by her once again, she went to *Bombay* to spend some summer days in her company.

There she had occasion to come in close and frequent contact with her prospective brother-in-law. The more she saw of the good looking Dilipkumar, the more she was bewitched and drawn to him. It was that way that her liking for him was fanned into a flaming love. With complete lack of moral feelings and principles, one day she asked Dilipkumar who was already engaged to her sister, to marry her. Selfish love makes one blind to proprieties and consequent injustice and harm to others.

Dilipkumar said that he found the proposal interesting and worthy of consideration " The only snag is, said he, before I withdraw my love for Vimala, I must return to her the sum of Rs. 6500/– which she gave me for starting my present stationery mart and I haven't that much money with me now." He was one of those who traded on feminine love to make money by entrapping innocent girls of poor understanding, in the net of his attractive athletic appearance and able speeches. Of that lowliness of character was Dilip.

Divyaben had no money – nor could she manage to knock out that much amount from the limited means of her parents. Her well-to-do uncle would never finance her plans to out-do her own sister's marriage. She was hard put.

It so happened that there was an old lady living next door to Divyaben's house. She was there all alone and from her only son who was working in Nairobi, she was receiving regular remittances for her maintenance. She had in her possession gold ornaments, gold coins of *Cutch* and pure silver rupees collectively valued at ten thousand rupees or so. The old lady had managed to keep aside all that, without the knowledge of her earning son who was in Africa, With the wind of affection for aged parents and elders, changing in the current times, she had only taken precautions to provide herself for the lean periods which may warrant her to stand on her own. Because it was her concealed savings and because she also wanted to rejoice herself by handling them now and then, she kept the lot in a covered metal pot and buried it under-ground. It is women's own way known to women only. In families where the earning members are mighty spendthrifts, the far-sighted women folks deftly remove monies and store away form a future need. Whenever women report losses of jewellery or monies, in nine out of ten cases, it may be taken for granted that either they have stored them away or they have helped some of their poor relatives or given away in thoughtless charities. So, when confronting above situations of losses in our homes, we needn't wing ourselves with undue haste and blame some innocent persons.

Divyaben used to visit that old lady very often and she also helped her with the house-hold work, whenever necessary. It was during these visits that she happened to notice few times the old lady counting the ornaments of the yellow metal and replacing the pot in the special underground pit. Divyaben thought of trying a hand at it. She told Dilipkumar that she would endeavour to arrange for the amount needed by him and that she would call him to her home town when she was ready with it.

Divyaben left *Bombay* and went to her parents. Little later, she visited Zaveriba – the old lady. Zaveriba had missed Divyaben for long and therefore she gave her an affectionate welcome, without in the least suspecting that her treasure would be stolen away by her. Thus, at an opportune time, Divyaben dug out the place and found the pot and its contents in tact. Replacing it as it was, she covered that circular little pit.

In the evening that day, she sent a telegram to Dilipkumar summoning him to come soon by the next train to meet her. She then procured from the bazar an old metal pot similar to the one which was in the house of Zaveriba. Next morning, Divyaben went to the place of Zaveriba with that purchased pot well covered in a bag, just at the time when she was bathing and hid the same in an unused corner. Zaveriba came out of the bath-room and asked Divyaben to prepare some coffee for her. She took the coffee and before settling down to her daily *poojas*, which took her full three hours, she asked Divyaben to mend the quilts which she had shown to her on the previous - afternoon. Divyaben took about half an hour to finish the work. Zaveriba was in her prayers. She prayed with closed eyes and never spoke while in communion with God. As such, Divya's path was clear. All that she had to do was to plant the stone filled pot in the pit and to walk away with the pot which contained what she wanted. But, because she had never thieved, the moment she brought out the pot from the pit, her conscience began to bite her, her hands perspired profusely, and the pulses raced. Somehow, she subdued the thousands of thoughts that thumped through and tried to terrify. her. She wasn't deterred - her need was greater. She put that heavy pot in the bag and went back to her home.

As was expected, Dilipkumar came in time and took possession of the weighty pot and left for Bombay. Divyaben was asked to reach there a week later to be married to him legally in the office of the Registrar of Civil Marriages.

Dilipkumar's call came and Divyaben went to Bombay. They got their names registered as husband and wife and the new couple left on a short trip to Agra. On the following day an English and *Gujarati* news-paper published their photographs and announced about their civil marriage.

On learning the news, Dilipkumar's parents were surprised and Vimalaben was severely shocked. She didn't expect either her suitor or her sister would double cross her that way. She went to Dilip's parents. They simply expressed their sincere sympathy for her. They said that they knew nothing about the monetary transactions between the two. They however advised Vimalaben to go to the police and lodge a complaint against Dilipkumar for cheating.

When the couple returned from Agra, Vimalaben endeavoured to meet them, but they tactfully evaded her. Then she wrote letters to Dilipkumar demanding the return of her money. The letters returned with "REFUSED" stamps on them. Infuriated, she caused her uncle to step into the matter. Her uncle wrote a strongly worded letter to Dilip threatening him with dire consequences if he didn't forthwith return to Vimalaben all the money which she had given to him.

Vimalaben became unnerved. Living appeared fickle, all her dear dreams of a happy life having been nullified so cruelly. It was too much for her tender mind to bear. With a view to put an end to her waste life therefore, she took an extra doze of some poisonous tablets and died. A note found on her person and addressed to Divya and Dilip read :—

"Divya & Dilip ! Both of you acted in a very mean way, heartlessly casting aside the

thoughts of the ruinsome repurcussions your acts would have on a hopeful heart. It is nature's infallible law that they who ruin others' happiness can never be happy. That law will find you both guilty and ye two shall reap what ye both have so laboriously sown."
"VIMALA."

When Dilipkumar and Divyaben heard about the suicide, they reacted differently. The hard-hearted Divya didn't feel much, but Dilipkumar who had so heartlessly let down Vimalaben and swindled her of her savings, somehow became repentant and remorseful, more so, because he apprehended sure trouble from Vimalaben's uncle, in the light of the latest development in the case. In those moments of mental torture, he cursed his birth and behaviour and went away from his home, taking nothing with him. None have seen or heard from him thereafter. Heaven alone knows where did he go or what happened to him.

The noble minded parents of Dilip returned to Vimalaben's parents the sale proceeds of the stationery store and other belongings of Dilipkumar which they knew to have come from Vimala's money.

Divyaben, the creatrix of the whole sorrowful incident, returned to her accommodative parents. It dawned upon her, very late, that life's issues demand sane and serious thinking and that thoughtless moves, made in weak moments of excited emotions, end in a bad quagmire. Since her return she is engulfed in a pool of desolation, dejection and despondency.

Then started the strange and throttling experiences. Divyaben began having foul dreams, freightening hallucinations, nightmares, convulsions, etc., which deprived her of normal sleep and hunger. Now she remains fidgety, and very often, when possessed by Vimalaben's spirit, she behaves like her late sister in every respect – speaking French which Vimalaben knew so well. As it generally happens in all cases of possession by the spirits, Divyaben also feels very much dispirited and sullen.

Because Divya and Dilip, by their selfish and sinister conduct, drove Vimalaben to commit suicide and cut off her life – string, they both were adequately penalised immediately. Such is the just workng of the law of *karma* which sees to it that individuals pay for their premeditated wrongs in their present birth itself.

PARENTS PUNISHED :

It was a full-moon day and I was seated in the open terrace of my room at a friend's place that night in Poona, admiring and thanking the Lord for his wonderful creation. I was all alone in the house. My friend had gone to *Matheran* with his family members.

The telephone bell rang. I picked-up the phone and the feminine voice across the line asked and added "Haloo ! is it 8420 ? Please take down a phonogram message to your address. " KRISHNANAND CARE TF 8420 POONA "-the text of the message is " ABHILASH EMPLANING FOR AMERICA TO-MORROW EVENING PRAY MEET AERODROME-PURUSHOTTAM ".

I put down the receiver, did some quick thinking and took an instant decision to rush to *Bombay* to see off Abhilash.

Shri P. P. Patel who was an executive in an European Engineering Enterprise happens to be a good old friend of mine and his only son Abhilash was proceeding to the states for special studies.

Abhilash was quite bright in his educational courses. But it can't be said of him that he was good natured. He was affrontly arrogant, annoyingly adament and abhoringly abusive in his general conduct. Due to excessive parental pampering in the name of love and affection, like the children of all such irresponsible – but otherwise good parents who don't train their children in good manners at home, Abhilash also lacked them and as such, when he came in contact with outsiders in or outside his home, they always carried back poor opinion about him. All the same, because he was their only son, his noble and tolerant parents took it all lightly and hoped that with the passage of years and change in environments, like others of his type, their son would also change.

In big cities like Bombay where living is pretty costly, even the three figure income group people hardly save anything. As such, shri Purushottambhai didn't have the requisite amount to readily meet the expenses of his son's education abroad. But as he was to retire from service after two years and receive about twenty three thousand rupees by way of gratuity and accumulated bonus, he borrowed from five favourable friends five thousand rupees each.

Because of his pure-hearted and loveable parents, there were good number of friends and relatives at the Santacruz air-port to give a warm send off to Abhilash. Only his ailing sister Sarla couldn't come.

Besides the general suggestions on how he should behave in America, as a further parting advise to his son, Abhilash's father read out also the following piece of poem on "WHAT MAKES A MAN" which he had received from a *Ceylonese* teacher friend of his who was working in *Colombo*.

A trustful soul, a loving mind,
Full of affection for its kind;
A helper of the human race,
A soul of beauty and of grace.

A spirit firm, erect and free,
That never basely bends the knee.
That will not bear a feather's weight,
of slavery's chain, for small or great.

That firmly speaks of God within,
And never makes a league with sin.
That snaps the fetters despots make;
And loves the truth for its own sake.

That trembles at no tyrant's nod,
A soul that fears no one but God;
And thus can smile at curse and ban,
This is the soul that makes the man.

Holding on to Abhilash by his square shoulders, his mother said to him. " Dear son your father has already made some sound suggestions and has given you versified hints on a clear cut civil conduct capable of making you a worthy man. Yet, I wish to add something direct to them. Hear attentively and bear them all well. Within the next forty hours or so, you will be in NEW YORK CITY and like all the *Indian* emigrants immigrating to the western countries for the first time, you also would feel that you are in a wonderland – a place where everything, the people and their general ways are radically different to what you have been used to here in *India*. Maintain level – headedness and be adaptable enough to flow with the current of sane living of the gentry there by avoiding adamance and artificial adherence. What I wish to affirm is, like in all countries which have made a stupendous materialistic progress, in America even, you are bound to be lured by temptations which are barred and banned in our *Indian* way of living. Please guard yourself against those cheap and harmful trends. This will be easier of accomplishment if you harbour within you a constant remembrance that you hail from a *Hindu* family of laudable traditions and that your parents have sent you to America at the cost of considerable economic privations, solely with a view to equipping you with higher technological talents to help building our country that it may also emerge as a self-sufficient and supporting nation. In your day to day dealings and duties, always be upright reasonable, loving and persevering. We are confident that you will acquit yourself commendably and that you will soon be amidst us again. May the Lord bless your trip and higher education," concluding so, Abhilash's mother kissed him good-bye.

Though it wasn't discernible to the loving eyes of his parents, by his demeanour, Abhilash betrayed disinterestedness in the wise counsels of his mother, so affectionately given by her. The silly souls seeking 'self-doom through disinclination to accept and adopt appreciable advises; even so, it was evident to a penetrative eye that to Abhilash also the sweet and sane sermons sounded simply snubbish and meaningless.

An announcement from the aerodrome mike summoned the passengers to the custom's barrier and Abhilash instead of pleasantly parting as others did, rushed away from us all—not even caring to look back, smile and wave.

His unseemly manner can only be described as that of a person getting away from a group of people including his noble parents without the scant respect for their feelings. His parents however, dismissed it as a childish prank and entreated us all not to mind the lapse on the part of their son.

A considerate and understanding boy in place of Abhilash would have chosen to go by sea on a tourist ticket, tacked to it the winter concession and saved his parents atleast two–thousand rupees on the fair and at the same time learnt many preparatory things on a month's cruise; besides western manners and essential etiquettes so necessary to easily escape ensnaring estrangement and embarrasment when facing the members of the polished society in America. He could have also feasted his eyes by going ashore when the ship touches the ports of Aden, Suez, Port–said, Gibralter, Southampton etc., But, like the common run of impractical boys, Abhilash also chose to fly to America to join the spring semester scheduled to start after twenty–four hours of his landing in NEW YORK.

His first letter to his parents, the first ever in English came after a month while his parents were longing to hear from him. The contents of the letter again were disappointing. It read "I am alright. Send the second instalment of money in time. Don't forget sending to me some more of pickles and *papads*. My American associates are awfully after it. " There were no thanks, *namaskars* or query about the health of his ailing sister who loved him so very much. The parents were very much hurt. They couldn't show or speak to others about that letter. When Sarla wanted to read it her-self, she had to be silenced with the false excuse that the letter was misplaced and could not be found. Shri P. P. Patel had however told her a good deal of imaginary things about the contents of the letter and as also how much Abhilash missed her and was worrying about her health etc.,

After a fortnight or so, thereafter, there was another letter, though it was a little lengthier, in that too, the general courtesies were absent. In that letter Abhilash had written at length praising about American assuetudes and affection, academic abilities, administration, abounding amenities and arms and ammunitions. He also touched upon posh hotels homes and hostels and described U.S.A. as a country which was capable of fulfilling the dreams, desires and demands of one and all. Month after month he wrote home and somehow his later letters liberally improved on surface contents. But to those who could read in between the lines, it was clear enough that he was selfishly wise admixed with artificial goodness, gentleness and greatfulness.

At the end of two years, Abhilash completed his studies in the Amircan Unversity and took up employment in an Engineering firm there. This pleased his expectant parents. During the course of his one year's service there, Abhilash wrote home as usual and all his letters only contained details of his having hired apartments, ordered new suits, purchased a car, household accessories, inviting guests and accepting invitations and all that. He sent nothing to his parents nor did he indicate as to by when he would do so.

Parents' pitiable plight when the old order changes making them dependents of their one time wards is very severe indeed.

Because Abhilash belonged to the *Patel* community of *Charauter* where grooms with foreign education and employment abroad are in good demand in the affluent families of *patels*, Abhilashkumar planned to come on leave and get married for a fat dowry. His parents booked space in the local papers to publicise his arrival, a day in advance – with his photograph.

Advertisements announcing arrival, of *Patel* boys from abroad are usually designed to inform prospective parents with marriageable daughters that the boys are open for a matrimonial negotiations.

Abhilash arrived as anticipated. His father shri triple ' P ' who had by then retired from service and who had shifted to his native place in *Gujarat* was being approached by parents who wished wedding their daughters to his son. There were offers and counter offers. At long last Abilash airily agreed to marry a graduate girl gloved with little patches of leucosis on her hands, hips and heels. As do all patel boys, Abhilash also was marrying for money and the parents of the girl had to sell their landed properties to give a heavy dowry to gain marriage alliance for their only daughter in a home where they felt her domestic life would be happy and enjoyable.

On a date agreeable to both the parties, Abhilash was married to Asha against a cash dowry of Rs. 35,000/-. besides gold ornaments and clothes worth another big some congruent with that of the above mentioned dowry amount.

A week later Abhilash left for America. Before he did so, he prevailed upon his father to permit him to take the amount of dowry to America where he said monies multiply within a short period and that in about a year of his departure to and stay in New York he would send his father a sum of Rs. 1,00,000/-. The needy Shri Purushottambhai was naturally lured and he agreed to the tempting proposal without fully suspecting that his son would double cross him. The Americanised Abhilash arranged to have the rupees converted into dollars and flew back.

During his stay here in *India*, like all persons who have stayed abroad, he also began coldly criticising the conditions obtaining in *India* in general and condemning the *Indian* ways in particular. In his comparison of *India* and western countries, akin to emigrants of boosted ego, he also talked only of everything good in the western society and illogically enough, compared with it every thing that is bad in *India* – painting the country as a veritable hell. He talked of *Indian* bad manners, students indiscipline, poor sanitary conditions, power – thirsty leaders, mass corruption, favourtism, nepotism, red – light lanes, rising crimes, dirty hotels, primitive ways of eating, illitracy, inefficient administration, lack of nationalistic spirit, black-marketeering, scarcity of food, malnutrition epidemics, money minting medicos, beggars' nuisance, and of live people with limitless possibilities praying for worldly things before the inert and stone images and also of mundane minded monks.

Only gutter inspectors see exclusive dirt everywhere. Aren't they expected to search, find and expose DIRT alone ???

Instead of maintaining an economical living standard in America and sending regular remittances to his parents who had spent their all towards his education abroad, Abhilash led an extravagant life there and FELL in love with a waitress of a cafetaria. When the condemnable carnal cravings cum considerations cook-up conjugal companionship, it always culminates in a fall. Abhilash went further and got married again with that self-styled 'miss' who had earlier proved faithless to two tender husbands.

At the end of three months matrimonial adventure with the American waitress, Abhilash who had to spend lavishly on her, found his funds dwindling. The ill-got money was ill-spent. He wanted more money soon, Therefore, not satisfied with what he had already done to dupe his parents, and knock out a big sum of dowry from the parents of Asha, he had an eye on his wife's ornaments which were worth minimum fifteen thousand rupees in any market. Then, there was her little savings also for his asking.

So, he sent her a steamer passage and somehow managed to get her to America as his dependent and lawfully married wife that she was also. Asha who was pining to join her husband felt very happy when she received the passage plus permit.

Asha boarded 'Atlantica' and enjoyed a sick-less cruise. As her ship was nearing the American port of destination, her little heart danced in delight in the feeling of joining one who had solemnly taken her in his life to live jointly-sharing his home, hearth and hopes. The port was still distant-not clear enough to sight. Yet, with the mental binoculars of emotion filled imagination she figured Abhilash-her life-partner anxiously and affectionately waiting to receive her with outstretched hands. With this sort of natural feelings coursing within her, the intervening interval immeasurably hung over Asha.

The ship's speed slowed soon-the seamen were ready with their ropes and the passengers aboard the ship stationed themselves behind the railings. The expectant and eager eyes of

Asha focussed on the waiting crowd on the docks and spotted her handsome husband. The ropes and cables were cast out for the mooring, the ship's engines came to a stop and 'Atlantica' was berthed and anchored. The passengers rushed out of the ship and proceeded to the 'CUSTOMS CORNER'–checking cum clearance didn't take long and wasn't annoying as in the *Indian* ports.

Asha joined her husband who was waiting with worn–out spirits. The wordless wel-come worried and disappointed her. They drove to the new apartment which Abhilash had earlier hired to run a separate home with her. On reaching home also, he didn't speak with her. When she solicitingly shook him to speak, Abhilash sternly stared and stridently said, "bad luck has landed me in a financial crisis and unless I get one–thousand dollars soon to patch up the loss, I am afraid, larger losses will career us to a doom". Asha who had come with high hopes harping in her, became sadder. Collecting herself, she lovefully proposed like the innocent and unwary birds entering into the binding nets cast by a hunter. "I have brought with me my gold ornaments and I am sure the sale proceeds of the same would more then meet your immediate monetary requirement to tide over the bad weather." That's exactly what Abhilash wanted. But akin to bad intentioned and selfish persons who falsely pose to be considerate and accept favours only in a patronising way, Abhilash countered, " Oh ! no – that wouldn't be proper – atleast it is not the only way out. I am presently working upon few possibilities and God forbid, should I fail, then and then alone shall I think over the desirability or necessity of accepting your offer. ".

Before the wake of the next week of her landing in America, Asha's gold ornaments which were worth over fifteen – thousand rupees were sold and Abhilash began spending them freely on his American wife Shirley who pestered Abhilash with new and costly wants.

As it happens in cases of individuals who get involved in the deep, difficult and deceitful game of divided love, Abhilash had also to cook – up false stories and excuses to cover – up his frequent absences from his twin homes. Because she was in a strange social atmosphere, Asha unsuspectingly accepted the excuses of Abhilash, swallowed her emotions and hoped for a changed situation in the not too distant future.

Because the love affair of an individual is a personal pigeon of his own, members of the western society arn't in the habit of prying into, gossiping about or pricking the baloon of private matters of anyone. As such 'illicit love' takes considerably a long time to come to the notice of neighbours or the aggrieved party. But Shirley, the Amercian wife of Abhilash smelt oddness in her husband's absence from home on pretexts never before advanced by him. She began to keep a watch on his movements. Before long, she spotted him with Asha and with ease she managed to get friendly with her under a changed name and got all the details. Shirley wasn't shocked; she had married him only for the pleasures which his money and earnings could procure her and as she also knew that Abhilash hadn't much money left, she was on the look-out for chances to boot him out also – out of her life and that too, by making him feel the hardness of the kick which quick-loving women alone are capable of giving.

Because he had sown the seeds of deceit and harm, things were taking shape naturally to reward Abhilash with the harvest undreamt by him. Shirley knocked – out more money from him for her brother's education and other necessities and when she was quite sure that her foolish husband was dried – up financially, she served him with a notice for 'DIVORCE' on the ground that he had cheated her by falsely representing himself to be a bachelor.

Abhilash was shocked and to save his face for the time being, he persuaded Asha to return to India on the plea that he would be able to save a little to overcome the financial troubles by remaining alone for about six months. The dependent *Hindu* wife considerately agreed and she was packed off to her home. Asha's dear dreams and desires remained unfulfilled. Excepting the famous Guggenheim Museum, she hadn't seen other attractions in NEW YORK. She reached her parents all of a sudden and at a time when they were expecting happy news from her from NEW YORK. It was all very sad. But the forbearing *Hindu* ladies put up with it as a common lot of *Indian* women.

Asha's sudden return to *India* – so soon, little after a bare month's stay in NEW YORK, sparked off conjectures in the minds of people in her home-town; and to her parents who had staked their all for her happy wedded life, it was a bolt from the blue. The haste of her hushed arrival naturally made them also to seek suitable explanation from Asha. All that the simple Asha said was that her husband was caught-up in dollar shortage for the time being and to lighten the burden on his purse, she had to come back for a brief stay. She asked them not to worry as she would be recalled as soon as conditions there improved.

The parents of Abhilash felt all the more pricked and – justifiably became apprehensive. Some of their friends' sons were also in America and they wrote to them requesting for a watch over and complete report about Abhilash. When they learnt about the naked facts they became cold and white with dejection. Their son Abhilash's career abroad was covered with distrust, defilement, debts, dishonour and divorce suit – the ruinsome effects of mad involvement in the fleeting worldly pleasures. They were non-plussed. They could do nothing. The inevitable prospects of bad days of pecuniary needs and the problem of Sarla's marriage began to hover and hang heavy with them. They wrote half a dozen letters to Abhilash who was running a losing race in the Americanised life, but he kept quiet. With that came the obvious end of relationship.

Asha's parents also learnt with great dismay about the mess Abhilash had made of his life and the consequent ill-effects of it upon them and their only daughter. They also wrote to Abhilash. No letters came from him. He remained silent to legal threats also. He seemed to know that the arms of *Indian* law cannot powerfully operate against him across the seas. The parents and distant relatives whose sons were rejected by Asha's parents, now had cause for jeering at them. Asha and her hard hit house-hold members felt that they had badly erred in going for marriage with the haste they did - instead of doing it in the wise 'betrothal' system which usually allows a span of twelve months' time to the two parties to survey, study and secure useful and better understanding of one another-so necessary for building a happy harmonious home. Like late rains, this dawn of wisdom after the problem was beyond solution and rectification, was useless and meaningless. Abhilash abandoned Asha as was Abhilash by Shirley.

Divorce being very common in western societies, the legal procedure governing the cases happens to be very simple and prima facie ones are usually disposed off without the least delay. Shirley's solid stand against Abhilash accomplished annulement and alimony for her within two months. Abhilash who sought and booked himself for amorous adventures, attracted awkward and asahmed attention in the American court of law. But as it happens with all thick persons who are cut-dead to wisdom, Abhilash's craze for clubs, cheap carnal charms cum champagne hasn't also ebbed out of him. He is still in America and all anxious attempts and anticipations to bring him back to India or improvement have miserably failed.

Had the parents of Abhilash instilled in him all the fine advises of good conduct right from his childhood before launching him on the slippery land of crowded temptations, he would have certainly grown up to wishful expectations and led a useful and responsible life, charged with everything good and uplifting. But unfortunately, like most good parents who give too little attention to their childrens' growth, Abhilash's parents also neglected the basic care of moulding his character and are now uselessly weeping over the barren and crooked tree that Abhilash can be likened to.

BEWARE BAPTISM :

Some years back, while in Bombay, I had gone to the Churchgate station. To digress a bit, as are big marketing centres, the big railway stations like Churchgate and Victoria Terminus are also very interesting places; sites that offer sights on initial study in human character in all its variegated shades. Particularly, during the peak hours of the mornings and evenings when thousands of people from the suburbs are pouring into the fort area or returning back to their homes, hold out exciting, educative and enlightening opportunities to those who are interested in character studies. The ingeniously set mass of bones, nerves and sinews draped with flesh, blood and life force – living and moving as different units carrying within each of it, multifarious emotions, sentiments, feelings, thoughts, desires, cares, anxieties, apprehensions, fears, shyness, inhibitions and all, are what we human–beings are – the Creator's most enigmatic and crown creation.

Akin to a big departmental store which offers for sale major human needs, even so, the ever busy railway stations and the market places are full with lessons on human emotions in action. Because people of particular semblance and shape generally behave identically, from their different gaits, their bodily movements like signalling shake–hands, shrugs snappiness and salutes; and facial expressions such as sighs, stares, scorn, search, smiles, strangeness, soreness, and showiness etc., we can reasonably deduce as each of the individuals belonging to a distinct group of persons possessing the following positive, negative or the mixed human characteristics of simpleness, sensibleness, seriousness, sociableness, softness, staunchness, spiritedness, sweetness submissiveness, sombreness, silliness, slothness, slovenliness, smallness, suspiciousness, superstitiousness, severeness etc.,

The bigger and busier the stations or any big public places, the greater are the chances for clicks of expressions of moving emotions in their naturalness. They can be said to be snap – shots from the camera of the quick eye and the sensitive brain working in unison – a very reliable inroad into the inner stuff of different people.

Because there are opportunities to suitably cloak oneself for the occasion, what we get to know of persons when they are in small groups or alone, and when we ourselves are not well conversant with the diverse human behaviour that spring from different physical frames, they can only be the effects of pondered poses plus prepared poise and hence not dependable.

We may as well know also that studies of pulse rate demand stillness of the person under examination, whereas, studies in human character call for movement and motion in the individual under study.

As earthly beings with crowding needs and imperative necessity to deal with people at every minute of our living, practical studies in human behaviour from public places and through standard books on phrenology can make our life more smooth – freeing it from the onslaughts of deceit, duplicity, dissensions, disappointments, defeat and dishonour.

Besides the useful lessons on human traits and temperaments, to those watching from a vantage point, the railway stations offer also pleasant feast to the eyes enabling one to observe people of different calls, castes, colour, creed, cravings cum character, moving into and surging out of them as distinguishable batches of high – ups, white – collared class and the orthodox 'touch me nots' unmindfully brushing shoulders with the low, the poor, the hawkers the crippled, the fisher - women, milk - men, the coolies and the members of the wrongly termed weak - sex and thus unconsciously exhibiting oneness of feeling, civic sense, consideration for others and self - discipline. Such scenes for how much so ever a short duration they may be, they are desireable trends all the same - preparing plus prompting one and all to implement these high traits in our respective fields of day to day activities as basic rules of general conduct.

" Come, dear readers, let's get back to the Churchgate station of the period prior to the construction of the present sub-way and other good changes in the station premises. "

On the foot - path facing the eastern gates of the ever-crowded station was a well-dressed young man with heaps of books for sale. His slogan was 'PICK & CHOOSE - ANNAS EIGHT'. Offers of things for sale with English cries isn't very common in India. But the youngman there was hawking in English - the sweet language of international usage. He was doing so because he had English books for sale and wanted to attract the *Tamils, Andhrites, Malayalees, Marathis, Kannadigas, Bengalis, Goans, Parsis, Afghans,* *Ceylonese* and the westerners passing into and out of the station. It was a novel sight indeed. I was drawn to him and his printed wares laying subject-wise arranged. There were handful of people around him - picking and choosing from the lot of printed stuff.

The way he held out cash for his customers to collect their changes showed that he valued human trust. When he had to give currency notes as changes, he only gave the good and clean ones, showing that he was considerate. His general bearing as he stood there announcing his wares denoted that he believed in dignity of labour. The subject-wise arranged books on philosophy, palmistry, phrenology poems, economics, self-improvement, travels, astrology and literature, showed that he was a well educated person and also that he loved orderliness. From his offer of that rich variety of books for the paltry price of annas eight each, it was evident that he was in instant need of money. The clean carpet on which he had piled the books conveyed that it was the first day of the sale. All the books were in a fairly good condition and gave the appearance of having been handled by a single man and the name 'R. S. Lele' found written on the inner cover of each of them made it clear that all the books belonged to a single man also. The neat markings on the pages of interesting and important passages in the books on many subjects revealed the wideness of the owner's interest and knowledge.

When after I had picked – up a small book of poems by Harendranath Chattopadhyaya, the poet laureate of *India*, and he turned to me in response to my call by name ' Mr. Lele ', I deduced that he was verily the owner of the lot of those rich books lying for cheap sale. Mr. Lele gave me a momentary stare of surprise and accepted the money which I had paid him for the purchase. As there were also others to attend to, he quickly turned to them.

I stood up and waited on. I wanted to cheer him up and gear him to courage. Because, it was obvious enough that he was in trouble and in urgent need of money – which compelled him to give away good lot of very expensive books for eight annas each. So, not wanting to embarrass him with a dig into the details of his apparent bad times and when none else were near him, I said to him " meseems, you are on the high – tides of difficulties. May the marciful Lord God grant you courage and resources to wade through it all and bless you with better times." No sooner had I finished saying so, the few books in the hold of his hefty hands slipped and reached the heaps below and his hard hands gripped mine persuasively; and with wonder writ expression he asked, "Swamiji! how come, you know about it ?" Before I could plainly tell him that I had only put into operation the elementary techniques of deductive observation and accurately arrived at his state of want, he gave me his home address and entreatingly said, "Swamiji! I want you to favour me with a visit to my house to-morrow morning at 8 a.m. I somehow feel that in my present difficulties, your guidance will be of solace and help to me. Please Swamiji! please promise me that you will come." As I left him with an assurance to positively call on him on the morrow, he rent the air with his "PICK & CHOOSE – ANNAS EIGHT."

On the following day, I reached his house – a small block in a good locality in *Malad*. He appeared to be waiting for me. We sat in an empty room and I clearly saw fresh traces of that room having once been fairly furnished and the barren walls having been adorned with pictures and a clock. The general atmosphere of his house was one of gloom, apprehension and anxieties. He called his mother, wife and son. Theirs were starved faces minus of cheer.

Then, by way of little introduction, he said to them, " this swamiji is good at divining. He is an emissary of God and I feel that his august visit to our home will bring us good luck. " I silently swallowed the embarrassment caused by his wrong but innocent evaluation of me.

Thereafter, speaking about himself, he stated, " Swamiji ! secure from and above worldly wants and worries as you and your like are, you monks are the ones that can wisely aid us to tide over the difficultes that confront us. I was an Accounts Officer in a local firm. At the end of my seven years' service with them, as my bad luck would have it, I have been sacked. I tried my level best to take up alternate employment elsewhere, but I didn't succeed. The last two years found me pulling on with my little savings and meagre financial help from relatives. Then I had to dispose off a good deal of housewares to run my home. You witnessed me last evening clearing away expensive collections of reading material. Because of my worsening domestic situations and not infrequent wants, all the relatives and the one-time good friends of mine have ceased coming to me. As things stand today, I am under the burden of quite a sizeable debts. Because calamities have a way of crowding on a downfallen individual, my eldest son has run away from home with the sale proceeds of the radio and the dear pile carpets, my daughter is down with typhoid, my last son is begining to lose eye-sight and asthma has taken shelter in my wife. Now Swamiji ! I seek your guidance and help. Please let me know if you can do anything to pull me out of the mire of my present misfortune. "

It was indeed a genuine case of a family in financial distress. I had some friends in Bombay who could do something to secure him a suitable job. So, I gave him three letters of introduction addressed to persons who could give him a lift either in their office or try for him elsewhere in their circle of helpful contacts. Then I pressed him to accept. Rs. 150/- which I had with me, as a brotherly help. But he politely refused to accept. He even declined to take it as a loan. He seemed to have his own reasons for not accepting monetary help from me.

His sense of restraint even in those moments of immediate need moved me. But there was nothing more I could do. I wished him good luck, gave him the address where I could be contacted and left after asking him to let me hear by the evening.

After 9 p m. that day, as my visitors were taking leave of me, Mr. Lele showed up in cheerful spirits. I thanked God and congratulated Mr. Lele. He reported to me that he was taken up temporarily for the time being, with an assurance of confirmation in the job if he proved efficient enough. As I was to leave Bombay on the next day, I furnished him with my address in *Saurashtra* and asked him to be writing to me.

After nine months, I received a letter from Mr. Lele who had changed to Mr. Lawrence, the latin meaning of which name is 'one crowned with laurel'. He had written to me in *Marathi*. It read :—

Dear Swamiji,

I am writing to you after two hundred and seventy days of our last meeting in Bombay, where you knew me as one R. S. Lele.

Your friends who were kind enough to take me up in service dismissed me as inefficient after I had been with them for three months. The way I was served with a curt dismissal order, it appeared to me, that they had absorbed me only to please you for a while. With the loss of job once again, I had to front a good deal of odds for two months.

Some four months back, however, I came in touch with the Church's compassionate clergymen and to be brief, when I and my family members accepted Lord Christ as our Saviour, on the very day of our baptism, all our problems and difficulties disappeared in the same way as darkness does with the rising of the sun.

These days, I am in a Christian institute here in *Belgaum (Mysore state)* as its well paid secretary, with free quarters and free education for my children and am also enjoying the benefits of contributory insurance. The church has cleared all my debts and has ushered into my life requisite security that I and my dear ones may also live happily for the long we may have to.

The loving priests visit our house periodically as they do others' places also, to sincerely enquire into our secular and spiritual welfare – a soothsome experience which I had never come across as a member of your *Hindu* society. On the other hand, when circumstances constrained me to approach well-to-do *Hindus* and your 'ananthashrivibhushitas' whom your society falsely believes to be the defenders of *Hinduism*, to my sad dismay, I was only shown the doors with their out-stretched hands of helplessness. Ofcourse, they held out dry sympathy and asked me to pray to God for strength to pull on. I did not tell them that Lord God had also delegated to them some of His strength in the form of wealth that they may also utilise it for helping the trouble - stricken.

I do not wish to sound slanderous now that I have quit Hinduism nor again as one fastly beating the drums of false flattery for Christianity - my new benefactor; I am only giving expression to the truth which I have sanely surveyed, seriously summed - up and sparingly said.

I don't know how you will react to this letter - but all the same, I thought it fit to pour myself out in the strain I have done, before one who had truly tried to tow me out of tragic times.

Please remember me in your prayers that I may grow in steadfast faith for CHRIST - the symbol of Universal love ".

Yours fraternally,
' Lawrence '

Love for the glorious Christ – one of the Saviours of human society is quite in order and understandable. But what makes it pathetic and shameful, is that six more cultured members of a Hindu family who would have blossomed as emulative *Vaishnavite* devotees of *Lord Krishna*, were driven by the needs of hunger, home and happiness to embrace Christianity even like the lacs of forsaken illiterate *Hindus* were lured to do so in the past 250 years.

Who are to be blamed for the conversions? The just reply would be, not our Christian brothers. The whole blame squarely falls on the whole of disorganised separatist tempered members of the *Hindu* society in general and its irresponsible religious preachers plus preceptors in particular – who in the name of religious sanctions treated a sizeable section of *Hindus* as worst than dogs and disowned them; and when at last no more able to suffer indignities from their own brethren, they became Christians to escape the pangs of humiliation, hunger and homelessness – the *Hindu* society and its double faced leaders condemn charitable Christian clergymen who are so very sincerely working for the establishment of the Vetican rule throughout the world.

The *Hindu* religious leaders who have all along rowed the society in their anchored boats of self-seeking, taking themselves and their followers nowhere, should soon step down from the heights of selfish and separatist tendencies and as also from fancied greatness and sincerely work in unison for the social good of their followers before launching them on the abstract and abstruse regions of love for the Lord, transcedental meditation, Kriya yoga, raja yoga, vedanta and such like spiritual *sadhana* which can never fructify without economic and social security.

Those *Hindu* monks who go about with trunk loads of books and deliver crammed discourses on religion and God, the swamis who cannot do away with snuff and control their temper even for the short while they so glibly talk from the cushioned platform on temperance and tolrance, those yogis who are busy importing the products of frustration and failures popularly known as beatniks, beatles and hippies, those sedentary, plump and saffron robed nuns who dress colourfully and deliver memorised lectures on raja yoga - frequently belching on the public platform, those self-styled *kalki* avatars who produce trashes like ashes, photos and watches through sorcery and yet brand them as divine miracles and thus draw, delude and deceive the gullible, those sadhus who claim to have converted atheist rajahs and are now busy trying to recruit atleast hundred Englishmen to Hinduism – when half the Hindu population of Hindus know nothing about their religion and culture, and married religious acharyas who are immersed in mundane marshes of love for silks, scents and luxuries, those brahmakumaris who to establish their new cult are propagoting fanciful version of Gita and are also actively working for expansion on coercive grounds that except the members of their cult, all the world population would be doomed to death in the world dissolution which they say is to take place within eight years, and above all, they whom not even the one – tenth of the Hindu population follows and who yet move about as Jagadgurus preaching oneness of beings and practicing the orthodox untouchability and visit peoples' houses only against fixed fees, ALL of them should wake up and do something constructive to arrest the menace of proselytisation, the offspring of ignorance, hunger and want amongst the Hindu members, and thereby regain their true respect.

Opinions current in the rising generation of the present day scientific minded educated

Hindus is that, the aforementioned types of religious preachers and preceptors are covetous cum commercial creatures who have cast to winds the glorious traditions of the past and that in the name of relief, reformation, religion and realization they simply seek respect, reception, roof, raiment, rations and revalued rupees for themselves.

That our Hindu temples are rich enough is a common knowledge and if those heading them choose, they can all by themselves successfully work for the amelioration of the distress of their respective displaced followers and prevent them from having to change their religion for food, shelter and medicine. A portion of the enormous wealth of gold ornaments and precious jewels in the possession of the temples could be advantageously converted into ready money, and wisely invested in fixed deposit and help the needy from the rich interests therefrom and thus make the members of the society feel that what they give to the temples belong to them and that they may bank on the temples for aid in hard times as used to be the practice in the good old days under the system of tithe. With this sort of functioning and assurance, the temples can create incentiviness to draw more donations and gifts from their followers, render humanitarian service and endear themselves in the eyes of God and human beings His noble creation.

Unless some such sane steps are taken quickly I am afraid patriotic members of the parliament, like Shri Baburao Patel will bring in legistation to freeze the temple properties on the cogent ground that as they have come from the society, they belong to it and should be made available to them in the present time of need to check "CHRISTIAN DOMINATION OF THE WORLD" now severely threatening our country of rich spiritual heritage.

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CHEERFUL EVER BE :

Creator's crown children ! Cheerful you can and should be,
Herebelow are the simple rules which please try and see.
Envy none give others what from them you want,
Erase thoroughly thy tilting tongue's touchy trait to taunt.
Reasonable be in your wants – seek not labourless gain.
Forget the past, face the future without fears vain.
Unwillingly attend not to anything which you must do,
Laughingly retire to bed – likewise resolve to rise too.

Eat right food, moderately, others don't please force feed,
Value others' wise opinions – obscene literature don't ye read.
Emulate the great – live ye all a philanthrophic life,
Reassured remain, you will escape every storm and strife.

Believe ye me, to help us ever ready is HE,
Earnestly please follow the rules and CHEERFUL EVER BE.

Krishnanand

GRACEFUL LIVING :

GRACEFUL LIVING we should know demands the following modes,
Respect for time in all activities must top life's codes.
Avarice should be kept at bay – likewise adamance too,
Calumny cum callousness should be chased by a boo.
Enmity we shouldn't court – lovingly we must others win,
Flighty we must never be – nor revel in sin.
Unbeknown we should serve others – we musn't seek fame,
Level – headed we must prove – keeping away frome double game.

Law – abiding we must ever be – avoiding all cheap fun,
Idleness shrinks our strength – this trait we must shun.
Vanity should be eschewed – sanity should take its place,
Incorruptible we must remain – without running a losing race.
Needless help we must withhold – feel pleasant after giving,
Gain general good and abiding peace through **GRACEFUL LIVING.**

Krishnanand

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BARODA BRANCH.

FLEE FROM FEAR :

Flee from fear it mainly springs from apprehensive thoughts,
Lack of courage is ' FEAR ' – we roll on cots.
Effects of thoughtless actions – when we can't discreetly bear,
Enters in ' FEAR ' – to oppress us, it does dare.

Fear causes us to suffer major pains plus pangs,
Rakes our nerves – curdles blood – our heads it bangs.
Our thinking it clouds and great chances it hinders,
Makes us weak – we stand reduced to cinders.

Fear which jostles us is self – decay, and deflection,
Eradication & recognition of 'Fear' demands rational reflection,
Awakened if we remain – ready with our wisdom's gear,
Reassuredly, we all can overcome and FLEE FROM FEAR.

Krishnanand

KNOW THEM TO BE SAINTS

KNOW THEM TO BE SAINTS who unreservedly love all,
Nonchalant they remain having toppled nescience's high wall,
Objective they by nature are – they're immune to fright,
Wide are their wise views – others they make bright.

Tactful in all dealings – others' feelings they don't hurt,
Helpfully they remove others caught up in mundane dirt.
Envy is strange to them – they wish all well,
Meanness is alien to them – tales they don't tell.

Talkative they never are – empty words they don't weave,
Orderliness they love most – to formalities they don't cleave.

Betrayal they never practice – trustworthy guardians indeed they are,
Essence of religions they teach – against dogmatism they war.

Satisfaction courses through their veins – fuss they don't make,
Abstract and abstruse arguments they avoid – they abhor everything fake,
Impervious to praise plus pranks – above duality they stand,
Needs don't haunt them – they don't obey desires' wand,
To tolerance they're truly wedded – they are above all taints,
Such souls, whoever they are – KNOW THEM TO BE SAINTS.

—Krishnanand